



PS3  
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PSP  
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# PlayStation®

## Official Magazine - Australia

ISSUE 59 SEPTEMBER 2011  
100% Australian Content

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Wallabies Rugby Challenge  
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▶ STABTACULAR SPECIAL

# Ubi's killer app 44

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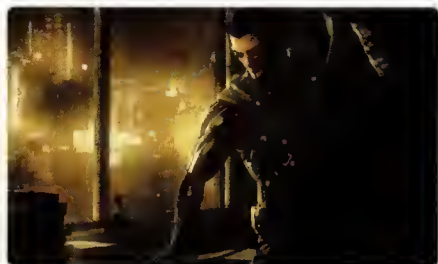
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No, not Renegade OPS. Rather, *Renegade Ops* is a new twin-stick shooter made by the *Just Cause 2* guys and it looks tops.



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Who doesn't want robotic arms? Somebody we don't ever want to meet. How can we get some then?



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Sackboy hates a lot of big things. But he also reserves his venom for the smaller stuff too, like microtransactions on the PSN.

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Scintillating scarefest or horror story worth running away screaming from?

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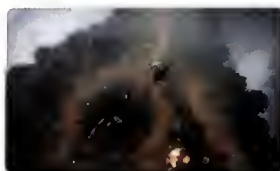
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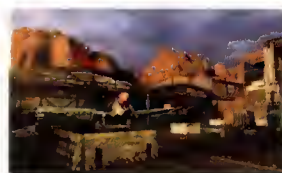
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## Meet the team

**Paul Taylor****Deputy Editor**

I've been on a DLC-buying frenzy with *DIRT 3*. A Gymkhana Mini just did a doughnut on my heart.

**Playing:** *DIRT 3*

**Wanting:** *Driver: SF*

**Stephanie Goh****Art Director**

ACR looks amazing. Istanbul is going to be my next Summer holiday destination.

**Playing:** *L.A. Noire*

**Wanting:** *Assassin's Creed Revelations*

**Adam Mathew****Associate Editor**

Man, slow month for great games. Bigger this, I'm off to play *Mass Effect 2* again. Insanity mode. Boom baby.

**Playing:** *Mass Effect 2*

**Wanting:** *Batman: AC*

**James Cottee****Contributor**

I've been sitting here wondering to myself. Is it too late to vote for Mike Hagger for Prime Minister?

**Playing:** *Portal 2*

**Wanting:** *Batman: AC*

**James Ellis****Contributor**

I'm sorry, *MVC3*, but I'm never coming back online with you. You can't help but hurt the ones you love.

**Playing:** *Oblivion*

**Wanting:** *Skyrim*

**Nathan Lawrence****Contributor**

It's amazing how easy it is to pwn n00bs when there's no CoD-auto-snap-to-players in multiplayer.

**Playing:** *Uncharted 3 (beta)*

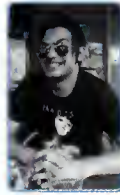
**Wanting:** *Deus Ex: HR*

**Dave Kozicki****Contributor**

*Uncharted 3* multiplayer is so much fun. Now if we could just get Nathan Fillion to play Drake in the movie...

**Playing:** *inFAMOUS 2*

**Wanting:** *Batman: AC*

**Toby McCasker****Contributor**

Currently agonising over how my *Mass Effect 3* game is gonna pan out. I've got a sinking feeling that Wrex needs to live.

**Playing:** *Mass Effect 2*

**Wanting:** *Mass Effect 3*

**Angry Sackboy****Contributor**

Raging myself stupid at these lacklustre movie games. Who keeps buying this tripe and where do they live?

**Playing:** *F.E.A.R. 3*

**Wanting:** Fear

## Editorial



I'm not necessarily opposed to downloadable content, as a general rule. Some people are, and I certainly understand it. Part of me does miss the days where games were finished the moment they were burned to a disc. What you saw was what you got – no more, no less.

At any rate, I am comfortable paying for good, well-priced additional content for a game I like. Some games I play, like *Rock Band*, owe their very existence to

a stream of regular (in this case, weekly) DLC. That's its operating model. I was more than happy to shell out for the *Undead Nightmare* expansion for *Red Dead Redemption* too; that was an incredibly smart way of harnessing existing assets and (relatively quickly) creating something new and exciting for fans. The result was a product longer than many boxed games on shelves sold via the PSN for a fraction of the price.

As a revhead I'm also a total sucker for downloadable vehicles, especially classic ones. It's haunting me, for instance, that there's some *SHIFT 2* DLC I haven't got around to nabbing yet. There are some additional cars for *DIRT 3* I'd like to get also, but it's this latter game I've got a problem with.

With *SHIFT 2*, you see, I don't get the feeling that something's missing without the DLC. With *DIRT 3* I most certainly do. To summarise, just prior to the release of *DIRT 3* Codemasters released a video showcasing the game's Group B cars, the most lusted-over rally cars in the history of the sport. There were five cars in the trailer. The catch, however, is the game shipped with only three of them. Rally fans can be forgiven for assuming the Peugeot 205 T16 and Lancia Delta S4, cars that featured in the video, were going to appear in the game. I did, and so did the *DIRT 3* owners asking this precise question on the Codemasters forums. Nothing in the video suggested that you'd be required to purchase two out of the five cars shown separately later on. If it's not in the game, don't show it to us before the game comes out.

I read with interest the responses to a few questions regarding *Driver: San Francisco* from series creator Martin Edmondson. According to Edmondson there is no DLC planned for *Driver*. "Everything is on the disc for all to enjoy!" he says. Sounds like a good attitude to me.

**Luke Reilly**  
Editor

**Playing:** *DIRT 3*

**Wanting:** *Driver: San Francisco*

## SPEAK WITH US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



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The answer we were looking for is: an *OPS* subscription! Think about it, every issue – cheaper – delivered to your door via magic.

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**Special thanks:** Vinnie :: Nicole ::  
Lucy :: Luke Mathew :: Ella Indiana ::  
LD :: Tash :: Anna & Mikey ::  
Guillaume :: The extraordinary luck  
of beginners



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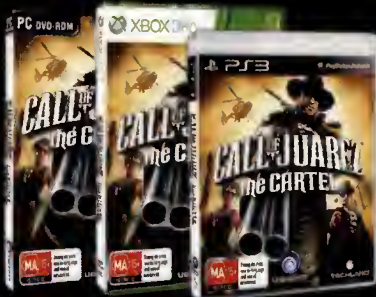
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## Credit where credit's due

Australian games developers to benefit from generous tax credit

The Australian games development industry is set to gain from improved tax credit legislation for small-to-medium businesses.

The \$1.8 billion research and development tax credit will deliver a 45 per cent refundable tax credit to businesses with a turnover of less than \$20 million, a bracket many Australian game development studios fall into.

The Game Developers' Association of Australia (GDAA) welcomes the announcement of crossbench support for the Bill.

Antony Reed, Chief Executive of the GDAA, supports the announcement as a demonstration of the Government's strong commitment to the development of Australia's knowledge economy.

"Since the first announcement of the R&D Tax reform and in our own discussions with the Department, it became very clear that the government has confidence in the abilities of Australian SMEs to deliver ground-breaking innovations for the global market," said Reed.

"Innovation is at the heart of game development and the introduction of the new legislation not only assists in levelling the global competitive playing field, but also affords the local industry the opportunity to challenge traditional gameplay conventions.

"Games have both driven advances in technology and brought advanced technologies into millions of homes around the world. The industry is constantly exploring new mechanisms to create engaging and meaningful experiences for players."

The global videogame industry is worth an estimated US\$50 billion worldwide. This is expected to rise to \$76 billion in 2013. It is the leading entertainment sector, eclipsing DVD or theatrical movie releases. A study released in the USA in mid June indicated that the average age of a videogame player is now 37 with 72 per cent of households playing computer or video games.

"News of the R&D tax reform has already attracted the interest of many global game

publishers," said Ron Curry, Chief Executive Officer of the Interactive Games and Entertainment Association. "The games industry is already a major contributor to the GDP's of a number of international territories and the introduction of the legislation could well put Australia on the same path."

"Once the legislation is passed through the Senate we should expect to see an increase in investment interest from publishers that have established development studios in Australia and potentially far greater investment in the intellectual properties being developed within local game development studios."

The Gillard Labor Government's \$1.8 billion R&D Tax Credit is expected to provide more funding to innovative Australian companies and began on July 1, 2011.

Reed believes it may help the local industry become one of the top three game development territories in the world, something the GDAA hopes can be achieved inside the next five years.

Issue 59 September 2011

## In Short

A brief look at this month's news



- ▶ **Dishonored** is a new stealth/action IP from Arkane Studios via Bethesda. The title takes place in an early industrial world with some fantasy twists. Players will become Corvo, a former bodyguard who's wrongly imprisoned for the murder of an Empress he was supposed to protect.
- ▶ Electronic Arts has announced its intention to purchase Seattle-based developer **PopCap** for US\$750 million, including US\$100 million in stock. The acquisition is expected to close in August.
- ▶ Starting with **Resistance 3** Sony is instituting a network pass program for PS3 games with online capabilities. This program will be game-specific; games that are a part of this program will include a single-use registration code that grants the account holder redeeming the code full online access for that title. Sounds similar to pass systems already utilised by EA, THQ and others.
- ▶ Lorenzo di Bonaventura and Gigi Pritzker, two producers who between them are responsible for both *The Wedding Planner* and all three *Transformers* films, have secured the rights to produce a movie based on Taito's **Space Invaders**. We are at a loss. Hollywood is officially out of ideas.
- ▶ **Portal 2** has sold 3 million copies since launch.
- ▶ **Gran Turismo 5** developer Polyphony Digital is transferring 50 of its 150 employees to a new location in Fukuoka, over 800 kilometres away from its Tokyo HQ.
- ▶ New **Medal of Honor** in 2012.
- ▶ The full list of the 125 cars appearing in **Driver: San Francisco** has been revealed and includes the 1983 GMC Vandura. Random sounding car, right? Jump onto Google and type 1983 GMC Vandura into an image search to see why we're grinning after we did exactly the same thing.
- ▶ **Dead Island** rated MA15+ by Australian Classification Board. The team at Valve silently explodes in bewilderment (presumably).
- ▶ **Modern Warfare 3** will feature an assist option for colour-blind gamers.
- ▶ **Rockstar Films** trademarked by Rockstar Games.
- ▶ **L.A. Noire** has shipped 4 million copies since launch.
- ▶ Disney moves to close *Split/Second* and *Pure* developer **Black Rock**. A few ex-employees have formed RoundCube Entertainment.
- ▶ **TimeSplitters 4** rumoured to be appearing at E3 2012.
- ▶ Activision registers **GoldenEye: Reloaded**. PS3 version of last year's Wii title?
- ▶ New **Rainbow Six** game coming, set in New York City.
- ▶ Harmonix has filed an "intent to use" trademark application for **VidRhythm**. It's not being revealed what it is.
- ▶ Media Molecule taking a break from **LittleBigPlanet** investigate new ideas.
- ▶ **I Am Alive** rated MA15+ by Australian Classification Board. Could be closer than we thought.



INTERVIEW

# The dogs of phwoaaarr

We speak to *Uncharted 3* co-lead game designer, **Richard Lemarchand**, about what Naughty Dog is doing to make this the best *Uncharted* ever

“That’s always the goal for us... **to keep the game in the player’s control** for as much of the time as possible”



**OPS:** *Uncharted 2* has a huge following, and *Uncharted 2* was one of our highest rated games of last year. What is *Uncharted 3* doing bigger and better than anything that’s come before it?

**RL:** Wow, where to start? Everyone on Naughty Dog likes to push themselves to achieve bigger and better. I think that you can see that in *Uncharted 2*, and we loved all the positive feedback that we got from it. So, we got to the end of *Uncharted 2* and we have this fantastic engine, the Naughty Dog engine, 2.0 that let us do all these amazing things, which immediately suggested to us cool ideas for additional stuff we could do. A big deal for us was the dynamic traversable terrain, which was the system that let us do the train level. Lots of games have train levels but they’re normally ‘cheated into existence’, but ours was a series of boxes that was moving through a real world around it rather than the world come scrolling by. It was same tech that let us do the collapsing hotel. You can then imagine the ‘creative leap’ we made to the capsizing cruise ship that we showed at E3.

**OPS:** The whole world was tilting on its side.

**RL:** So, yeah, not only were we running inside a level that was rotating, but we also completely reinvented our dynamic water systems so that we could have the explosion that causes the cruise ship to begin to capsize, also make the hold flood with water. That’s just one example of the epic things we’re able to do in our engine, which is has had so many improvements it’s now the Naughty Dog engine 3.0.

**OPS:** We were watching the water streaming in and lapping up at Drake’s feet. If he’d stayed in the hold would he have eventually drowned?

**RL:** In that situation it’s very technically complex for us to pull that off. The hold of the ship is full of pallets of freight, there are cars in there, and nearly everything you see is a physics object. So no matter where Drake is standing he’s going to react realistically to the objects around him. What’ll happen is that he’ll get tipped off the wall and fall into the water when it moves past a certain point. It’s all in real time, it’s fully interactive and that’s always the goal for us – to preserve the continuity and space and time for the player, to keep the game in the player’s control for as much of the time as possible.



**OPS: So tell us about the new modes. We played co-op; how is it tied into the storyline, or is it a bespoke mode?**

**RL:** It is a bespoke mode, we like to keep the single-player game very focussed on Nathan Drake, and it's a creative choice on our part and it lets us do things that we otherwise couldn't. But, we also love co-op gameplay and we wanted to do, well, they're almost 'parallel reality' missions in the levels from the single player game in co-op. We take the levels, we make some changes to them then we put multiple *Uncharted* characters into those environments. We're actually doing a lot more in *Uncharted 3* than we did in 2 in terms of cinematic adventure. We have lots of special animation, special little moments, things that happen so that two or three friends can play these mini adventures. It's to players to decide how many they want to play with. We've also included splitscreen for the first time in *Uncharted 3*.

**OPS: That's important. We often wonder why games don't have a splitscreen mode.**

**RL:** It came to us very naturally, and actually helps us with the stereoscopic 3D. It's something that's getting bigger and bigger, and we've been working towards it since the beginning of the project and we knew that it was going to present some major technological hurdles, and we hoped it would have a big impact on the gameplay. I'm very happy to say that it has, and it was very interesting to me as a game designer to see just how much 3D brought to the gameplay experience of *Uncharted*. One of the big challenges when you're making a character-based action-game like *Uncharted* is helping the player understand their spatial relationship to the area around them, and it's something that 3D really helps with. You really get a sense of the player in place and you can make jumps and traverse the environment with greater certainty.

**OPS: And how's the multiplayer development coming along?**

**RL:** We love multiplayer! We'd barely begun to do what we wanted to do with it in *Uncharted 2* and we're very pleased by the reception we got and we have a loyal fan base that are still involved today. We started working on the multiplayer even before we'd started on the

single-player campaign. We play test every day in the studio and invite the whole company to jump in and to play a few rounds with us, and then tell us what they think of it. And that's how we've been able to polish the game to the degree that we have. We have lots of new modes, including six new competitive modes and three co-operative modes, lots of customisable characters and symbols that players will see plastered throughout the level and a whole, huge system of unlockable boosters. These are things that players can earn or buy with the in game currency system which will give them additional skills and little helpers in the course of the multiplayer gameplay. That's one of the things that I enjoy about our multiplayer, is that you're constantly unlocking new stuff and becoming a more capable and strategic character.


**OPS: So what's your personal favourite little moment in the game so far?**

**RL:** A few things. The cruise ship level and a cargo plane sequence stand out for me. The cargo plane sequence uses the traversable dynamic terrain; imagine Drake's on a plane. Those planes have a big back door, and if that opens when you're in flight it's kind of disastrous.

**OPS: Ah, we spotted that in the trailer. So, what's next for Nathan Drake?**

**RL:** Well, there's *Uncharted: Golden Abyss* for Vita, and we've been collaborating with our friends at Sony Bend who are developing the title and I think people will be excited when they see it on new tech.

**OPS: How much involvement has Naughty Dog had in that? Is it equal measure, or did you give them the assets and say 'here, make something excellent'?**

**RL:** We gave them a lot of assets and a big brain dump to give them a leg up, but they're really running with it and it's very much their game. We've been very focussed on *Uncharted 3* but we know they're doing a fantastic job and we're looking forward to playing it when it comes out. 

► INTERVIEW

# Here be dragons

Lead producer on *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, **Craig Lafferty**, tells us how Bethesda's latest RPG is going to draw everyone into its world of magic, combat and fire-breathing dragons.



**OPS: What is it about the games that you think makes them so revered? Even non-RPG gamers talk about them and are aware that they're well liked.**

**CL:** It's just the size! You can be who you want, do what you want, go where you want, and the game just adapts. As you play you can build what type of character you want to be, so there's a lot of depth there, and hundreds of hours of gameplay. It's what you make out of it. [The team here is] the same core team members that worked on *Oblivion* and *Fallout 3*, and both of them won awards in the year they were released. We've grown since then, but it's the same people making the games. It helps us make the game better each time as well.

**OPS: Break it down for us. What are the key differences between *Oblivion* and *Skyrim*?**

**CL:** We did *Oblivion*, and we did *Fallout*, and we knew that there was still more that we could get out of this generation of hardware. So, we pretty much redid the entire engine. We have a new user interface, animation system, new renderer, new story to help tell the quests, and more. Plus,

this is the first time that dragons are in an *Elder Scrolls* game, and they're a big part of it.

**OPS: The dragons seem to be an unscripted part of the world of *Skyrim*. They just land and start being pretty menacing.**

**CL:** They are! When you come across them, they do their own thing. They can land, they can perch, and they can do bombing runs. Sometimes they fly by and pick other characters up. Every time we play something random like that happens because the dragons aren't scripted, and they're a key part of the main quests. As you play through you'll discover why.

**OPS: Are they purely antagonistic, or can you put a leash around one, climb on and go for a joyflight?**

**CL:** Ha, I don't want to go into too much detail about that, but you could say that not every dragon is there to kill you right away. I don't want to spoil it too much!

**OPS: Tell us more about how you progress through the game, as we just saw the**

**character enter the world and go from there. How much of a narrative do we follow, and how much do we diverge?**

**CL:** It's a combination of things. Part of it, being an *Elder Scrolls* game – do what you want, be who you want – is that you don't pick a predetermined character class. You just play. What you do determines your character class. We have a main quest and story that you can go through and finish, and we guide the player on that. Then if you don't want to you can just go off and do whatever you want. If you DO go off then we have all these other quests lined up for you. There's tonnes to do with 150-plus dungeons, and it's up to the player to discover how they want to play.

**OPS: What's your favourite part of the game?**

**CL:** The team's excellent at making an open world very detailed, so you go in the game and you have a stream with a school of fish, and then there's a huge mountains, and you can walk along and find a dungeon, then you're in there exploring for an hour. You can lose yourself in the world and there's always something new to find.

## OPS VAULT SEPTEMBER

### 2002 ►

In this dusty old issue we had first details about *GTA: Vice City*. We said, "You might have to do a mission wearing roller skates." Turns out we were wrong.

This issue also features a great interview with Mr. T ("[They] talkin' 'bout makin' an A-Team without us. I pity them! I pity that producer! I pity the actor that try to play Mr. T. I come by your house and break both your legs." This issue also boasted a first look at *Hitman 2* and *Freedom Fighters*). Reviewed was *Stuntman* ("both incredibly entertaining and immensely frustrating") and other gems like *Need for Speed Hot Pursuit 2* and *Aggressive Inline*.



### 2007 ►

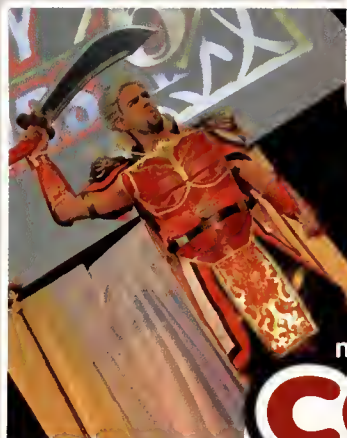
The cover of this issue promised a grudge match between *Juiced 2* and *Need for Speed ProStreet*. Looking back there was no winner here. The *Juiced* series vanished and THQ Digital Warrington (formerly Juice Games) is being shuttered. The experimental *ProStreet* failed to fire too, although the *SHIFT* series (EA's second attempt at a more realistic spin-off) has succeeded where *ProStreet* flopped. Perhaps more exciting was our first look at *Prototype* ("We are going to be on this one like a tick on a kelpie"). The PS2 title *25 to Life* became one of our most-hated games ever: "Avoid like the plague and men with trimmed moustaches."



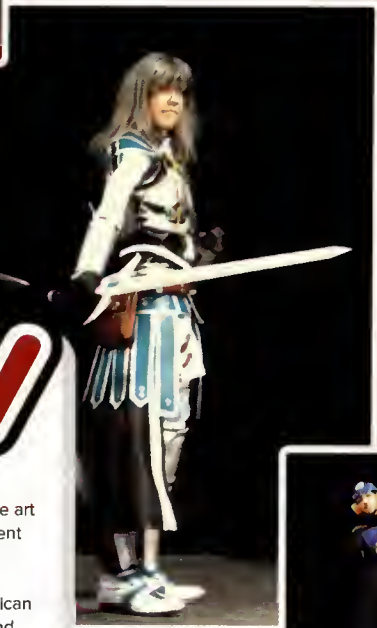
### 2010 ►

Our cover feature saw *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood* exposed inside and out and we also took a look at five things *Red Dead Redemption* taught us about life that aren't entirely true (mainly concerning cougars and prostitutes). We found *Singularity* wasn't worth the wait and *Transformers: War for Cybertron* was "far from mindless but further from brilliance." This issue also featured a somewhat gratuitous image of Elisha Cuthbert in pink panties and a completely made-up game called *Combat Assault – Project S.H.O.O.T. The Killening* that we know at least one person tried to pre-order.



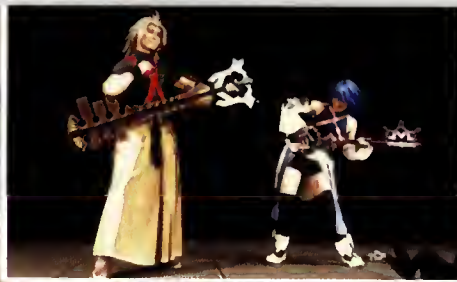


madman national  
**cosplay**  
championship



Cosplay, short for "costume play", is a type of performance art where people don costumes and accessories to represent a specific character. The characters are more often than not drawn from popular anime and manga from Japan – but cosplay isn't necessarily limited to those and can include American cartoons, sci-fi, comic books, graphic novels, fantasy movies and videogames.

Australia's finest cosplayers are going head to head in the Madman National Cosplay Championship. The winner of each of the five rounds held across the country until July will progress to the Grand Final in Brisbane on November 5. The prize is a trip to Japan, the home of cosplay!



**Sydney**

The Sydney round of the Madman National Cosplay Championship was held at the Supernova Pop Culture Expo from April 1-3. Four contestants were in the running in this tightly fought round. First place went to Kenny as Sun Jian from *Dynasty Warriors 6*.

**Perth**

The Perth round of the Madman National Cosplay Championship was held at the Supernova Pop Culture Expo (June 24-26) also featured four contestants. In the end only two points separated winners Team Poyozo Dance (who dazzled the crowd with a skit from *Kingdom Hearts*) and runners-up Min and Jen (dressed in costumes from Square-Enix's *The Last Remnant*).



▶ IN REALITY

# Cybernetic limbs: When can we have some?

As seen in: *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*

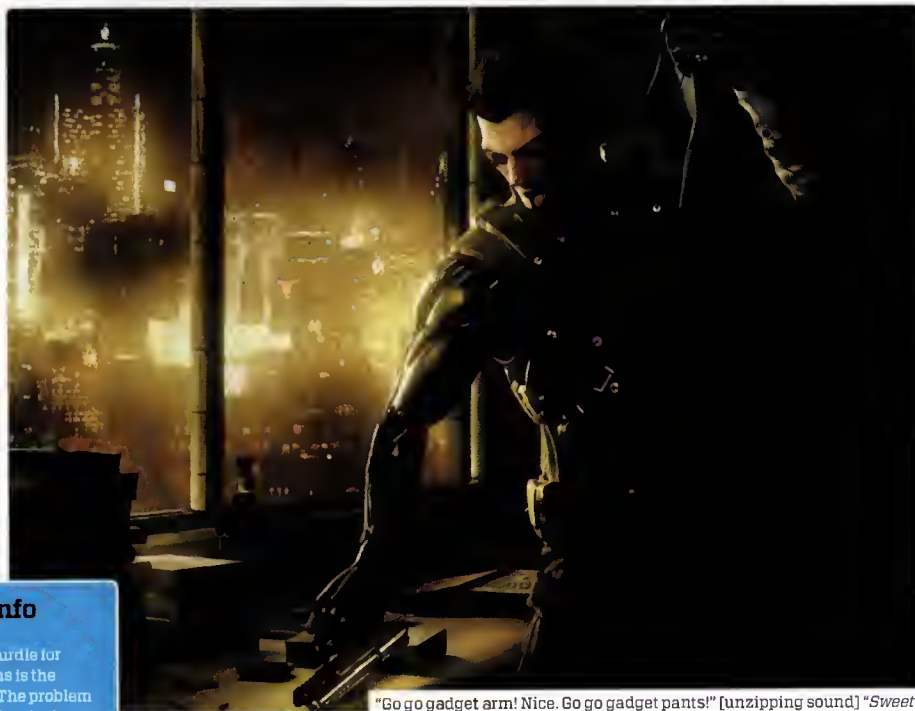
Adam Jensen, the scotch-drinking, cigarette-smoking, vengeance-fuelled hero of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* is more than human. His cybernetic arms can snap necks and punch through walls, and his assorted bionic implants give him powers and abilities far greater than those of normal men. But will the super-soldiers of 2027 really have access to that kind of hardware? Are cyborg arms like his even possible?

The answer to the second question is a definite 'Yes' – motorised prosthetic limbs powered seamlessly by nerve impulses were developed by DARPA way back in 2007. Crude-looking assemblies of metal and plastic, they aren't nearly as stylish as Jensen's sleek robo-arms, but they work. Test subject Jesse Sullivan lost both his arms in an accident, but his new limbs can lift and move lightweight objects. They even simulate, to some extent, the sense of touch; this direct sensory feedback is made possible by connecting the new limbs to his old nerve endings, which are still 'mapped' to the arm-control centres of his brain.

But eager cyborg-wannabes are strongly advised not to slice off their existing limbs with hacksaws just yet, as there are serious technical and practical limitations on the technology. For one thing, the replacement limbs science has given us don't come close to matching the strength, speed, or flexibility of organic parts. Such prosthetics must be powered, too, and barring some breakthrough in portable fuel cell technology they're guaranteed to go flat as

▶ More info

The next big hurdle for prosthetic arms is the human brain. The problem is finding mechanical algorithms that will properly decode the brain's signals so prosthetic limbs can understand them better and then, in turn, tuning the sensory feedback from artificial limb back to the brain (to fully facilitate smooth, organic movement). Creating a dexterous, high-performance limb is definitely possible but DARPA wants to know if the technology will ever be reliable enough for wounded soldiers to actually fight again with 100 per cent effectiveness.



"Go go gadget arm! Nice. Go go gadget pants!" [unzipping sound] "Sweet"

regularly as your mobile phone.

It's not the sort of gear you could wear in the shower, or at the beach, and it certainly doesn't heal – routine high-level maintenance will be part and parcel with any cyborg existence.

And while it's conceivable that synthetic materials and carbon nanotube nerves could some day be used to forge replacement parts that match the strength of normal limbs, it would be impractical to create limbs that are significantly stronger. Nay, it would be foolish. For just as an army marches as fast as its slowest soldier, and a chain is as strong as its weakest link, making replacement parts stronger than the parts they're connected to could lead to serious injury. A super-arm instructed to lift a heavy weight could easily pull right out of its socket.

The only way to correct that problem is to replace more body parts so that they all match: the epidermis, musculature, bones, and ligaments that support the weight of one's body, and everything it carries. The problem then is that you're basically Robocop, dependent on your mechanical systems for life support and doomed to suffer heated arguments every time you try to go through security at the airport.

No joke. Actually, this is already a huge problem for amputees with experimental replacement limbs.

Technology will some day give new life to phantom limbs but for now this dream is a bit like the world of a cyber-punk sci-fi film: at least 15 to 20 years in the future.

▶ NUMBER CRUNCHING

40

◀ The number of employees at Respawn Entertainment (out of 53 total) that have joined the studio after leaving Infinity Ward, following the sacking of Infinity Ward heads Jason West and Vince Zampella

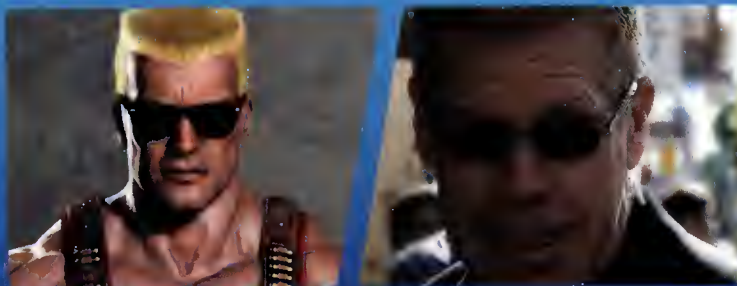
150 million

▲ Amount in miles *DiRT 3* owners have raced in game since release, according to Codemasters' Egonet servers



## Separated at Birth!

NO. 29 Duke Nukem and the guy underneath Hellboy, Ron Perlman



Current day Ron Perlman may just be a fraction old (he's 61 these days) to be mistaken for Duke Nukem but wind the clock back maybe five to 10 years and things would be a bit different. Perlman certainly has the gruffness and the swagger, and at 6' 1" he's tall enough to wear a red singlet and get away with it. He'd need to straighten those curls into a proper flattop though. That said, we don't think the Duke and Ron would have much in common – Duke is a womaniser who appears to spend most of his time with strippers and pop stars. Perlman's been married to wife Opal since 1981 and they have two children together.



## ► INFOCUS

# BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

Rocksteady's hugely anticipated *Batman: Arkham City* is already looming as one of 2011's true top dogs. It's also already crammed tight with about everyone who's ever raised a fist in the immediate vicinity of the Dark Knight – but the characters just keep on coming.

Warner Bros. has revealed that Robin will be a fully playable character in the new and improved challenge mode in *Batman: Arkham City* (like Joker in *Batman: Arkham Asylum*). The Tim Drake Robin pack is currently available exclusively to those who pre-order the game from JB Hi Fi.

Robin will come complete with his own unique gadgets and special moves and will be playable in all challenge maps in the game, as well as two additional challenge maps included with the pack. The pack will also contain a bonus Red Robin character skin.



# SO YOU WANT TO BE A ... COWBOY

► INTERVIEW

# Shooter revival

## OPTION 1

There's a hell of a distinction between the modern conception of a cowboy and the reality. The first is a kind of myth built on the legend of actors like Roy Rogers, John Wayne and Clint Eastwood, and the word 'cowboy' is often used to encompass a lot of types.

You could loosely take it to mean 'bloke on the back of a horse with a gun and a wide-brimmed hat and a rough sense of justice'. In reality, cowboys in the States who suffered and persevered through the frontier in the 18th and 19th Centuries were responsible for maintaining a ranch of cattle and other horses. This is a time before barbed wire was invented (the late 19th Century), so cattle roamed across the plains.

You need to be skilled riding on a horse, controlling it at speed and also comfortable being outdoors in all the elements whilst on horseback. That's if you have a horse that's willing to be ridden, else you're going to have to break it in and teach it to love the saddle.

Of course, there's the type who are rodeo cowboys, and that's something totally different. Rodeo riding is a sport where you need to learn the sport and needs its own discipline.

Back out in the real world, and somewhere between the 19th and 21st Century, you need a love of the outdoors and willingness to work hard. Skills include making a secure and sensible camp if you're roaming the wilderness, cooking food and being able to eat it without getting grit in it (eat with your back facing the wind). With a decent amount of cattle you need to be able to spot which bulis and cows will make strong offspring, which need to be castrated (you have to this) and those that are best for beef.

Gunslingers will learn that fanning your hammers with a speedy hand will spew bullets anywhere but near their target, and you don't want to mess with whatever's caused you to draw your gun. The solution? A shotgun, a steady hand and close range.

## TIME:

How long have you got? It'd be best if you're born into it, as that way you already have a base. Factor in time to learn to ride a horse confidently and competently, and being outdoors from as close as sunrise to sunset. Cattle don't take a day off, either, so it's a seven-day-a-week job. Call it a lifetime commitment.

## OPTION 2

Turn on *Red Dead Redemption*

## TIME:

Five minutes

**Tim Willits**, Creative Director at id Software, tells us more about the studio's all-out return to gaming, *RAGE*

**OPS:** The game's feeling pretty sharp and it feels like a while since we had something from id. What was the last game that you made?

**TW:** Well, because we have so many franchises, after *Doom 4* we started working on a game internally that we cancelled then we started working on *RAGE*. We worked with Splash Damage on *Quake Wars: Enemy Territory*, we worked with Raven on *Quake 4*; this is the next big thing from us.

**OPS:** So why is the time right for id to make their own self-developed game in that case?

**TW:** When you look at *Doom*, *Quake*, and *Wolfenstein*, they're huge franchises, with great pedigree, but we knew we wanted to make a different game and make it stand apart from the other games we made. At its core, *RAGE* is a first-person game, but the demo showed it has stuff that's not in typical first-person games like the racing and vehicle combat and we have much more story than we have in the past. So, we've taken the core mechanic of first-person shooting – which we invented – and we've just added a lot of meat to it to make it a complete experience.

**OPS:** For people who have only played it a short time and checking out the art assets, there's a definite *Borderlands* vibe.

**TW:** Oh come on! I sit in my office, and I can see Gearbox from my window – I feel like Sarah Palin and Russia. I hope now with E3, and people playing the game and seeing all the stuff you can do, hopefully that comparison dies.

**OPS:** We only mention it because they share the desolate theme, where you're going on quests, shooting bandits, marauders and driving vehicles. But what in your words is *RAGE* in that case?



**“I sit in my office, and I can see Gearbox from my window – I feel like Sarah Palin and Russia”**

**TW:** It's the holistic experience. It's on brand new technology, with the MegaTexture system we're able to 'paint' everything differently so you're not seeing the same, boring hallways for 20 hours. It's a 60 hertz game, it's really fast and responsive, it's an id Software game, but it's not a typical id Software game because it is so different. It's the combination of the variety of the different bandit clans and how they fight, to what type of weapons they use. *RAGE* is the big picture. It's definitely id's opus.

**OPS:** You mentioned the new technology. It's running on id Tech 5, is that made purely for *RAGE* or have the two been made hand in hand?

**TW:** Everytime we develop new technology we develop the game at the same time which is another reason why it takes a little bit longer, cause it's pretty tricky. One of the great things about John Carmack is he set the path for *RAGE*, and the tech and what it can do help guide our direction. Working on the game and tech is hard but it's rewarding as you can change directions without being boxed in to a predefined set of rules. It's both difficult and refreshing.

**OPS:** You mentioned that *RAGE* is not about going through the same corridors, but we're thinking about shooter fatigue. October's a pretty crowded month for releases...

**TW:** We're one of five in the big group of releases across all platforms, which gets us a lot of exposure. Because it's not your typical game and because it's an id game, that can get people's attention. Once people start playing it they'll be sucked in, and we're excited to getting it in the hands of our fans.

**OPS:** What's your favourite part of the game?

**TW:** The wingstick. If you're from Australia, and you've seen all the *Mad Max* movies a dozen times, you can appreciate the boomerang-like weapon. Yeah, the off hand wingstick is awesome.



## ► INFOCUS

**NEED FOR  
SPEED  
THE RUN**

**O**n the back of an E3 presentation featuring a lot of running EA Black Box has been quick to stress that *Need for Speed The Run* contains, in fact, very little running.

The breakneck E3 demo began with a race through downtown Chicago. Main man Jack's Shelby GT500 Super Snake is devouring the streets of the Windy City until it's clipped by cross traffic and disabled. Jack jumps out and the game turns from *Need for Speed* to *Heavy Rain*. Sprinting from several armed men and a chopper Jack dashes up some stairs in a nearby building, leaps across a handful of rooftops and finds himself in an alley with two cops and a police cruiser with the door ajar. Taking out one officer with a button prompt Jack's racing again in the freshly boosted patrol car, this time pursued by the helicopter. This chase sequence ends with Jack busting through a wall and landing upside-down on a railway track. In one final sequence (one especially reminiscent of *Heavy Rain*) Jack needs to figure out a way to kick out a window before being pancaked by an incoming train.

The quick-time events that formed a significant part of the game's reveal have triggered scepticism and disappointment but these sequences are said to account for less than 10 per cent of the total gameplay. Each is really just a cutscene with a little interactivity squeezed in; they're a means to get you into a different car or race type.

It's an altogether different beast from *Hot Pursuit* and *SHIFT*; we await more hands-on with the driving component for a better picture of the overall package Black Box is planning on delivering here.

► TOP TEN

# Budget PS2 titles

Near the end of a platform's life, a whole new mongrel breed of game starts appearing on shelves. It's the nearly broken budget game that's targeted at people who own a console but aren't likely to be upgrading to the next set of consoles anytime soon. It's for the "casual" player, the type of person swayed by the design of the box cover and low, low prices. Unfortunately, these games are often the most vile, underproduced games out there...



1

## London Cab Challenge

Wow. Just wow. This could be one of the worst boxed-copy games ever inflicted upon humankind. This is essentially what *Crazy Taxi* would look like if it was made by lobotomised monkeys on a Commodore 64. Cars and buses literally appear centimetres before your speeding car, as do whole buildings and patches of inconsequential architecture like *the ground*. GOTY all years.



2

## Home Alone

According to the box: "*Home Alone*. You are home alone". Well shit Sherlock, really? "Play one of four players including Kevin McAllister and recreate the action from the movie!" Wait, what? I'm home alone here. You said that. Twice. Where the hell did my three optional characters come from? And why was this released 16 years after the movie?



4

## Beverly Hills Cop

When you see the cover of a videogame about a movie without the main star on it (just the generic car he was leaning on in the film's poster), you can call off the search for crapiness then and there. Sporting horrendous graphics, AI and sound this FPS truly is the retail equivalent of two bananas in the tailpipe.



3

## Papparazzi

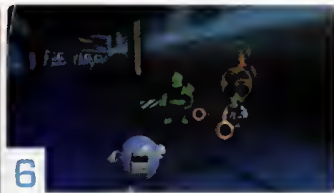
Boobs sell things. It's why hornbags will pay money to take photos of a low-poly creature with two wobbling things that better resemble jellyfish in zero gravity than actual breasts. Why people purchased this, as opposed to cutting out the middle-man and buying actual porn, we'll never know.



5

## Charlie's Angels

Beat up hordes of stick figure automatons as the bad cubist nightmare of Drew Barrymore. If you've ever wondered why third-person beat em' ups went the way of the dodo, look at this. The models of the Angels and their take on martial arts look like a public service announcement on the dangers of scoliosis.



6

## Smarties: Meltdown

The title serves as a preamble for what's about to come, what with its overt "brown stain" imagery. That said, for a game that bears the word "smart" in its title, the gameplay here is about as boring as a box factory. Essentially, you're a spherical thing platforming around "boxolate" monsters in their oblong lair.



7

## Little Britain The Videogame

Console says "no". With this you're paying way, way too much for eight awful mini-games including a 'fat lady' Pac-Man clone, vomit *Tetris* and 'obese gay guy' *Paperboy*. You'd have to be a paralytic drunk person who has mistaken their lounge room for the bathroom to put something worse into your PS2.



8

## NRA Gun Club

Straight off the bat: no, you cannot get cyanide tipped armour-piercing bullets in this game (even though it is in the US constitution). The only enemy in this game is a series of targets and a stopwatch maintained by Father Time (and no, you can't bust a cap in him, that'd just screw up the continuum).



9

## Robocop

We love Robocop. You love Robocop. Whoever made this? They loathed the poor metallic bastard. We're not even mad at this game for looking like the baby spew paste that Robocop ingests as food. What grates us most is that this R 18+ movie tie-in has none of the gore and melty acid police action.



10

## Kart Racer

When the name of your game is the actual genre you have officially run out of creativity. It's like Naughty Dog calling its next game *Shoot and Jump 3: Occasionally Dive Roll*. Anyway, you race exactly what you think you do in this and we've seen Powerpoint slideshows with better framerates. This fart in a jar comes from *Brain In A Jar* games, the developers of *Truck Racing 2* (where you race trucks) *Drag & Stock Racing* (where you race drag and stock cars) and *Noble Racing* (where you race Nobles).



## ► INFOCUS

# DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

At E3 2010 *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* was our top pick for Best in Show. At E3 2011 it had to compete for our attention against the likes of *Batman: Arkham City*, *BioShock Infinite* and *Uncharted 3*—but we're certainly not looking forward to it any less.

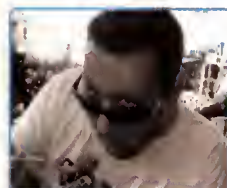
Of course, it's a shame the game had to be at E3 2011 in the first place. The game originally had

a February 2011 release date but was pushed back six months. Regardless, it's now less than four weeks before the game goes on sale and we look forward to fully exploring the final product. Our time with it to date has left us with a very positive impression; we admire both the neo-noir *Blade Runner* aesthetic and the depth teased during our hands-on previews.

▶ IN YOUR FACE

# Was Duke Nukem Forever really that bad?

Has the King left the building for good or was he ousted from his throne prematurely?



Dave Kozicki

## YES

Dave's other gig involves reviewing pornography and yet he still couldn't get behind this stripper-filled boob fest.

It's quite the oddity and one of the few titles in recent memory that has split the gaming community down the middle. Not burdened with 20 years of nostalgia I had a lash at *Duke Nukem Forever* and judged the game itself on its merits, rather than remember how good the King used to be and came to this conclusion: it's shit.

Beyond that, it's the worst kind of shit because it knows deep down in its heart it's shit and is hoping the decades of love you feel for the lead will make you part with your cash and fill Gearbox's coffers. Put aside the ugly textures, cheap AI, faulty hit registry, horrible character models, disjointed audio syncing and boring as batshit opening that had me reaching for Listerine to wash the taste out of my mouth. If the same game was released sans "Duke Nukem" in the title, would anyone cut it so much slack?

The answer to that riddle is no.

It's like judging a franchise on the strength of every title before the latest instalment, and that just doesn't fly readers. You want to revisit an old school classic and get a superior dose of gaming gold then do yourself a favour and get *Duke Nukem 3D* and revel in it. Don't slap a coat of paint on a half-finished release, trot it out at full price and expect me to gush and marvel at the accomplishment. Hey, you got a game out after 14 years that's generic, ugly, boring and flawed and I'm expected to herald your return? Big freakin' deal 3D Realms.

I'll leave Duke with this final word: stick to chewing gum big fella, 'cause you suck the big one in next-gen.

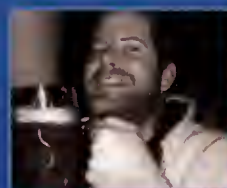
Before I begin, let me concede a point that was never going to be won. Visually, *Duke Nukem Forever* is no belle of the ball. It's the digital equivalent of a hood rat, or possibly a practice shag un-enhanced by beer goggles.

This fact is perfectly understandable and accepted by Duke fans as we see *DNF* as a time capsule from a long-lost era of gaming — one that we thought we'd never see unearthed. And hey, it's pretty silly to open a time capsule and poo your pants because "everything" in there looks all old and stuff". Amirite?

Graphics aside, *DNF*'s antiquity is its greatest strength. It's also the reason I liked it more than the yahoo outlets out there trying to make a name for themselves by giving it a 1/10. In a genre choc-full of drab, "me-too" conformity and political correctness, *DNF* struck me as a blast-from-the-past action romp that pinpointed exactly where we've lost our way with modern first-person shooters.

Forget the return of genius weapons that never should have left (shrinkrays, freezerays, steroid rage); when was the last time you were mentally challenged by a puzzle in a 'guns blazing' FPS? It's hilariously ironic that this — a light-hearted, tits 'n' ass dinosaur — taxes nogginns harder than the supposedly slick, intelligent shooters of today.

Is *Duke Nukem Forever* must-buy material? Sweet Jeebus Crisps no. But I guarantee you it plays a hell of a lot better than what those hive-minded haters would have you believe.



Adam Mathew

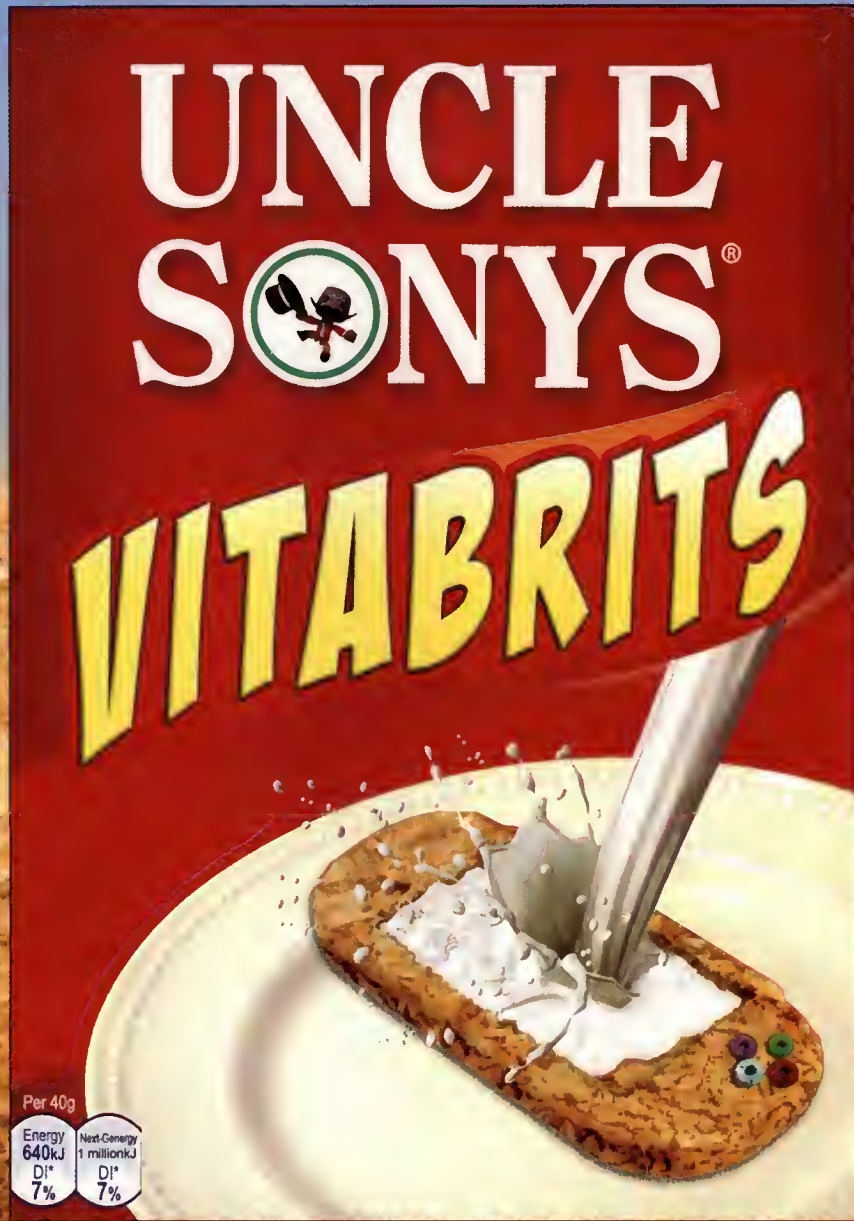
## NO

Adam is a Duke diehard and has since acquired a talking Duke Nukem stubbie holder that he's been using to answer phone calls.

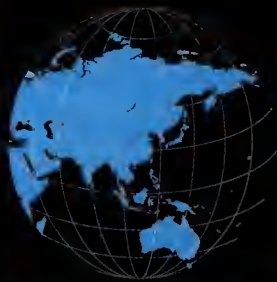
Want to hear more of the OPS team disagreeing with each other? Check out our Podcast available on side B of our cover disc. Want to get into a great debate with one of us, or a fellow reader? Hop onto [www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia](http://www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia) and make your case. The best topics may find their way into the magazine.



insane  
GAMING SATIRE



**TWO THUMBSTICKS UP  
FOR FLAVOUR!**



# Around the World in PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



▲ PLAY TIME IS OVER

🇦🇪 **ABU DHABI, UAE**

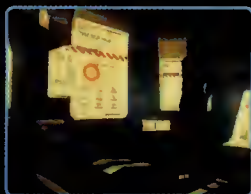
One of Abu Dhabi's top cops has called for a ban on the import of violent videogames after special forces arrested four masked men 'role-playing' with replica firearms on a rooftop. The men were dressed in camouflage and bulletproof vests as they videoed themselves (near a government building) in Abu Dhabi, daily newspaper *The National* has reported. Col Ibrahim Sultan Al Zaabi, chief of the city's Al Shaabiya police station, told the newspaper the men's behaviour was "absurd, childish, and unjustifiable" before blaming an increase in the popularity of violent videogames for the incident.



▲ SAYING NO

🇸🇪 **STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN**

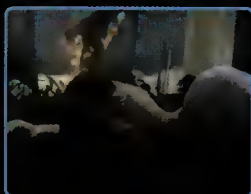
In a survey of around 46,000 teens the Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAN) discovered that percentage of Swedish 15-year-olds who drink alcohol has dropped to the lowest level in decades and has suggested that videogames are a factor in the decline. Figures for smoking and drug-taking also showed a steep decline. The survey also found drinking levels amongst boys are lower than girls. "Sitting by the computer playing games is perhaps more boy-oriented than girl-oriented," CAN director Bjorn Hibell told newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*. "That might be a contributing factor."



▲ 'DEUS' - IT'S 'SUED' BACKWARDS

🇺🇸 **SEATTLE, USA**

Square Enix has filed a lawsuit against unknown Italian individuals who infiltrated an invite-only preview of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*, then downloaded part of the game and leaked it. According to the complaint Square Enix held a preview of the game for press who could access the title through a secret, protected internet portal. Unnamed individuals logged into the restricted internet portal to view the game using an Italian journalist's access details (reportedly without the knowledge of the previewer or his publication). The limited preview build is only the first 10 hours.



▲ DEAD FIRST

🇫🇷 **CANNES, FRANCE**

Deep Silver's *Dead Island* trailer has been awarded a Golden Lion in the Internet Film Lion Category at the 58th Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. The stylish, confronting and somewhat upsetting teaser, which lit up the internet back in February, showed a family holiday interrupted by a sudden and mysterious zombie outbreak. Large portions of the video were shown in slow-motion and in reverse, including a sequence where a young girl is tossed through a window after attacking her father. The trailer was created by Deep Silver together in cooperation with animation studio Axis Productions.



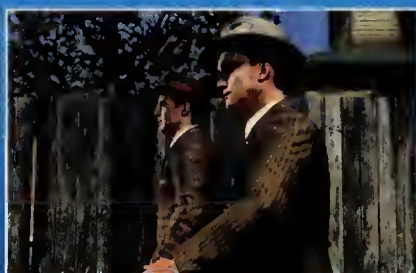
▲ VIOLENCE COOL FOR KIDS

🇺🇸 **WASHINGTON D.C., USA**

After years of legal battles, culminating with an appearance before the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS), a decision regarding the constitutionality of a Californian law that sought to make sales of violent video games to minors a crime has finally been reached. In a seven to two ruling it determined that the bill is unconstitutional on the grounds that it violates the First Amendment. SCOTUS determined that video games are protected forms of speech. Sex and boobs continue to be more disgusting than blood and gore in the USA.

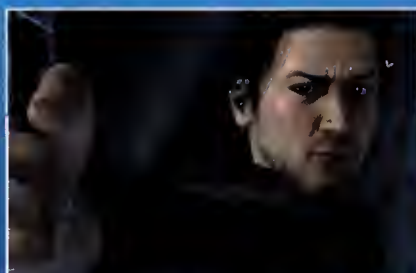
## INTERNATIONAL TOP 5 CHARTS

🇪🇺 **EUROPE**



- 1 **L.A. Noire** Rockstar
- 2 **inFAMOUS 2** Sony
- 3 **DiRT 3** Codemasters
- 4 **Duke Nukem Forever** 2K
- 5 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision

🇯🇵 **JAPAN**



- 1 **Ryu ga Gotoku: Of the End** SEGA
- 2 **Meruru no Atelier: Arland no Renkinjutsushi 3** Gust
- 3 **Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition** Capcom
- 4 **Bleach: Soul Ignition** Sony
- 5 **Troy Musou** Tecmo Koei

🇺🇸 **USA**



- 1 **inFAMOUS 2** Sony
- 2 **L.A. Noire** Rockstar
- 3 **Mortal Kombat** Warner Bros.
- 4 **Duke Nukem Forever** 2K
- 5 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision



# THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!

Aug 4

## Rise of the Planet of the Apes

Sure, the title's clumsy, but *The Rise of the Planet of the Apes* hits cinemas today and it looks spectacular. This origin story stars James Franco, Freida Pinto, Andy Serkis and John Lithgow.



Aug 6



## Rugby Union

Round three of the rugby union Tri Nations plays out in Eden Park, Auckland, and it's the All Blacks versus the Wallabies on the field.

Aug 10

## Sucker Punch

*Sucker Punch* is released on Blu-ray today. Directed by Zack "300" Snyder, this action-fantasy romp is a visual feast, and stars Australia's own Emily Browning and Abbie Cornish.

## Paul

Simon Pegg, Nick Frost and Seth Rogen star in *Paul*, a comedy caper with a foul-mouthed extraterrestrial. It's released on Blu-ray and DVD today.



Aug 17



Aug 18

## Scream 4

Neve and the gang return to the small screen in the Blu-ray release of *Scream 4*. Ghostface is back to do some damage!



Aug 18

## Cowboys & Aliens

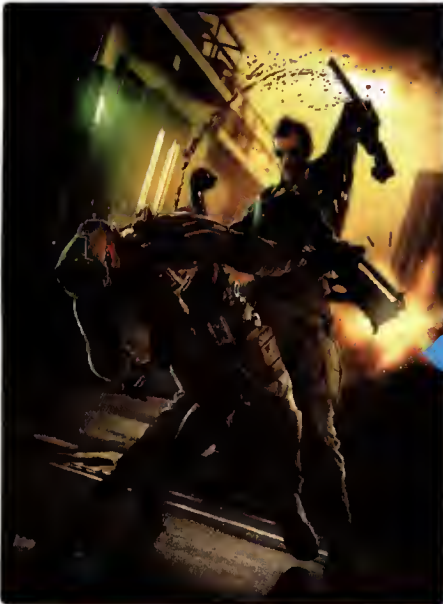
Directed by the guy behind *Iron Man*, Jon Favreau, this sci-fi Western stars Daniel Craig and Harrison Ford as cowboys while aliens try to take over the world in 1873.



Aug 24

## Fast & Furious 5

This powerslides its way to Blu-ray today, starring Paul Walker and Vin Diesel as the two team up. They're on the run from the law and a drug baron in this action-packed flick.



Aug 25

## Deus Ex: Human Revolution

The end of the gaming drought begins today with the release of the futuristic *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*. We've been awaiting this in the *DPS* office; review next issue.

Aug 27



## Rugby Union

The final match in the Tri Nations takes place today at Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane, with the Wallabies and the All Blacks finishing this festival of the boot.



## Can't miss... Masaya Matsuura AUGUST 20

Masaya Matsuura, the bloke responsible for the cult classics *Parappa the Rappa*, *Um Jammer Lemmy* and *Vib Ribbon*, is playing at the Sydney Opera House. It's also the last weekend of the Independent Games Festival here, too!

# Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

## OUT NOW

**Captain America: Super Soldier**  
Genre: Action  
Distributor: SEGA

**Red Faction: Armageddon**  
Genre: Action  
Distributor: THQ

**inFAMOUS 2**  
Genre: Action  
Distributor: Sony

**Shadows of the Damned**  
Genre: Action  
Distributor: EA

**Call of Juarez: The Cartel**  
Genre: Shooter  
Distributor: Ubisoft

**F.E.A.R. 3**  
Genre: Shooter  
Distributor: Warner Bros.

**Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters**  
Genre: Action  
Distributor: Warner Bros.

**UFC Personal Trainer**  
Genre: Fitness  
Distributor: THQ

**Cars 2**  
Genre: Racing  
Distributor: THQ

**Transformers: Dark of the Moon**  
Genre: Action  
Distributor: Activision

## AUGUST 2011

**Air Conflicts: Secret War**  
Genre: Flight Distributor: AIE  
Date: August 4

**The Lord of the Rings: War in the North**  
Genre: RPG Distributor: Warner Bros.  
Date: August 24



Deus Ex: Human Revolution on

**Deus Ex: Human Revolution**  
Genre: Shooter/RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners  
Date: August 25

**Rugby World Cup 2011**  
Genre: Sports Distributor: AIE  
Date: August 25

## SEPTEMBER 2011

**Driver: San Francisco**  
Genre: Driving Distributor: Ubisoft  
Date: September 2

**Resistance 3**  
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony  
Date: September 6

**Dead Island**  
Genre: Shooter Distributor: QVS  
Date: September 9

**Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine**  
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ  
Date: September 9

**Child of Eden**  
Genre: Odd Distributor: Ubisoft  
Date: September 13

**F1 2011**  
Genre: Racing Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners  
Date: September 22

**FIFA 12**  
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA  
Date: September 29

**NHL 12**  
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA  
Date: TBC

**Madden NFL 12**  
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA  
Date: TBC

**God of War Origins**  
Genre: Action-adventure  
Distributor: Sony  
Date: TBC

**Ico and Shadow of the Colossus**  
Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony  
Date: TBC

**PES 2012**  
Genre: Sports Distributor: Mindscape  
Date: TBC

**Supremacy MMA**  
Genre: Sports Distributor: AIE  
Date: TBC

**X-Men: Destiny**  
Genre: Sports Distributor: Activision  
Date: TBC

**Bodycount**  
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners  
Date: TBC 2011

## OCTOBER 2011

**NBA 2K12**  
Genre: Sports Distributor: 2K  
Date: October 4

**Twisted Metal**  
Genre: Racing Distributor: Sony  
Date: October 4

**RAGE**  
Genre: Adventure Distributor: AIE  
Date: October 7

**Dark Souls**  
Genre: Action Distributor: TBA  
Date: October 7

**Just Dance 3**  
Genre: Dance Distributor: Ubisoft  
Date: October 11

**Ace Combat: Assault Horizon**  
Genre: Flight Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners  
Date: October 14



Batman: Arkham City

**Batman: Arkham City**  
Genre: Action Distributor: Warner Bros.  
Date: October 19

**Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One**  
Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony  
Date: October 19

**Battlefield 3**  
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA  
Date: October 27

**Rocksmith**  
Genre: Music Distributor: Ubisoft  
Date: TBC 2011

**Silent Hill: Downpour**  
Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape  
Date: TBC 2011

## NOVEMBER 2011

**Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception**  
Genre: Action-adventure  
Distributor: Sony  
Date: November 4

**Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3**  
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision  
Date: November 8

**The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim**  
Genre: RPG Distributor: AIE  
Date: November 11

**Saints Row: The Third**  
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ  
Date: November 15

**Assassin's Creed Revelations**  
Genre: Action-adventure  
Distributor: Ubisoft  
Date: November 15

**Need For Speed The Run**  
Genre: Racing Distributor: EA  
Date: November 17

**Sonic Generations**  
Genre: Platformer Distributor: SEGA  
Date: November 22

**WWE '12**  
Genre: Fighting Distributor: THQ  
Date: November 25

► Limited Edition

## Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

Set to be the best PS3 game this year, *Uncharted 3* will take you from a derelict chateau in France all the way to the merciless Arabian Desert.

**Explorer Edition:**

Includes Nathan Drake figurine, Nathan Drake replica ring with necklace strap, Nathan Replica belt buckle and an antique style replica traveller's box. Also includes a PSN voucher to download a multiplayer skin and weapon, a multiplayer 'Upper Cut Taunt', a cash multiplier and a 'Special Edition Decals Pack' to customise your avatar's accessories.



**EB GAMES**  
\$208  
Estimated dispatch date:  
November 3

**JB HIFI**  
\$209  
Estimated dispatch date:  
Late 2011

**GAME**  
\$209.95  
Estimated dispatch date:  
2011

**Metal Gear Solid HD Collection**  
**Genre:** Action **Distributor:**  
 Mindscape **Date:** TBC

## 2011/2012

**DmC**  
**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** THQ  
**Date:** TBC 2011

**Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City**  
**Genre:** Action **Distributor:**  
 TBA **Date:** TBC 2011

**SSX**  
**Genre:** Racing **Distributor:**  
 Activision **Date:** January 2012

**Mass Effect 3**  
**Genre:** Action RPG **Distributor:** EA  
**Date:** March 6 2012

**Tomb Raider**  
**Genre:** Action-adventure  
**Distributor:** Ubisoft  
**Date:** TBC 2012

**Agent**  
**Genre:** Action **Distributor:**  
 Rockstar **Date:** TBC

**Spec Ops: The Line**  
**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** 2K  
**Date:** TBC 2012

**Metal Gear Solid: Rising**  
**Genre:** Action **Distributor:**  
 Mindscape **Date:** TBC 2012

**The Last Guardian**  
**Genre:** Adventure **Distributor:**  
 Sony **Date:** TBC 2012

**Max Payne 3**  
**Genre:** Action **Distributor:**  
 Rockstar **Date:** TBC 2012



Hitman Absolution

**Hitman Absolution**  
**Genre:** Action **Distributor:**  
 Namco Bandai Partners  
**Date:** TBC 2012



► **Pre-order**

## Deus Ex: Human Revolution

To save his life after a deadly attack, Adam Jensen had no choice but to become physically augmented with cybernetics. Driven by his need for answers, he soon finds himself chasing down leads all over the world. The choices he makes, as he unravels a vast conspiracy, will help determine the fate of humanity.

### Augmented Edition

Includes: *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* game disc plus bonus disc including a 44-minute making-of chronicling the trials and tribulations of the Eidos-Montreal team, motion comic based on the first issue of the DC Comics adaptation, game soundtrack composed by Michael McCann, E3 Trailer and animated storyboard. Also includes an exclusive 40-page art-book, Explosive Mission Pack (Exclusive mission: Tong's Rescue, multi-shot grenade launcher, remote-detonated explosive device, automatic unlocking device) and the Tactical Enhancement Pack (double-barrel shotgun, silenced sniper rifle, 10,000 extra credits).

**EB GAMES** \$118  
 Estimated dispatch  
 date: August 25

**JB HIFI** \$114  
 Estimated dispatch  
 date: August 25

**GAME** \$109 (web only price)  
 Estimated dispatch  
 date: August 25

### Prey 2

**Genre:** Shooter **Distributor:**  
 TBA **Date:** TBC 2012

### Final Fantasy XIII-2

**Genre:** RPG **Distributor:** Ubisoft  
**Date:** TBC 2012

### Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

**Genre:** Action **Distributor:**  
 Ubisoft **Date:** TBC 2012

### Ridge Racer Unbounded

**Genre:** Racing **Distributor:**  
 Namco Bandai Partners  
**Date:** TBC 2012

### Dust 514

**Genre:** Shooter **Distributor:**  
 TBA **Date:** TBC 2012

### BioShock Infinite

**Genre:** Shooter **Distributor:**  
 2K **Date:** TBC 2012



Assassin's Creed Revelations

# In their WORDS

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"We actually wanted to take this text and treat it in a new way, to give it to a team in Japan that doesn't have any connection to that. They're

not religious in that way, so they could treat it as just mythology and create a new graphical style and a new gameplay style"

**Shane Bettenhausen**, Ignition's Director of Business and Marketing, on the exceedingly odd *El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron's* Judeo-Christian inspiration.

"They're humans. They're mortal. Batman's a mortal guy, but he's a total badass, so we've got to make sure that all of a sudden someone like Riddler doesn't just develop superhuman strength because it makes gameplay sense"

**Rocksteady's Dax Ginn** on how *Batman: Arkham City* won't repeat the mistakes of *Batman: Arkham Asylum's* boss fights.



"There seems to be this distinction between games that are educational, and games that are going to be commercially successful. I'm not really sure I buy into that"

**Valve's Gabe Newell** on why games like *Portal 2* are also educational tools.

"Our view is that the next generation of consoles, if there are consoles, are going to be less about technology and more about service orientation of the gamer"

**THQ's Chief Executive Brian Farrell** muses the future of games at the GamesBeat conference in San Francisco.



► **Exclusive**

## Dead Island

When a mysterious epidemic breaks out on the fictional island of Banoi what was supposed to be a dream holiday becomes a fight for survival. As a guest of the Royal Palms Resort, a luxurious getaway to the beautiful beaches of a tropical paradise, you're suddenly faced with the grim reality of a zombie apocalypse.



### Collector's Edition

(exclusive to EB Games) includes: *Dead Island* game, Turtle Beach P11 headset, Turtle Beach T-shirt, Ripper weapon DLC, Bloodbath Arena DLC, Zombie keyring, three *Dead Island* postcards.

**EB GAMES** \$129  
 Estimated dispatch date:  
 September 9

# WHAT'S MY NAME AGAIN?

You don't know it yet, but you've just stepped into a title fight.



A few weeks ago we had a meeting with, oh, let's call them Company X, who are beginning to promote their latest batch of software, *No Game in Particular*, *You Might Like This*, and *A Pretty Good Idea*. Finally, to keep this anonymous, let's call the person who spoke to us as Person Y – I've signed a bit of paper that says I can't explicitly talk about what I saw, or what Company X's plans are for these games.

So, there we are, and Person Y is talking to us about *You Might Like This*. It may or may not be a big triple-A franchise, but it is doing something different to what you'd usually expect something with that title to do. Basically, they have an uphill battle with you, our readers. And they know it too.

Person Y realised that *You Might Like This* is quite unlike the game(s) that preceded it. That in itself is fine; change is necessary to keep things fresh. The problem is in the game's title: branding creates an expectation, especially when a familiar title is included on the boxart, and I get the feeling that this game isn't designed to explicitly appeal to hardcore gamers (though the title suggests otherwise).

The job that Person Y had wasn't necessarily to convince hardcore gamers that they were going to love *You Might Like This*, but to make them aware that it was going to be different from everything else that they'd seen so far. Person Y has the hard task of conditioning the savvy game-buying public to expect something quite different and not immediately dismiss it as not being what they

**“Company X don't want gamers to get this in their hands and think ‘what the hell is this?’ ”**



#### OPINION Paul Taylor

Paul Taylor figures the world wouldn't operate if every game had a Prince-like symbol on its cover. Imagine the amount of keys on your keyboard you'd need to have!

wanted. Company X don't want gamers to get this in their hands and think 'what the hell is this?' without being exposed to the message that they're trying to communicate.

And I wondered why. Why couldn't you just play this based on its own merits as a game? I've seen it in action and – hell, I'm in that demographic – I'm not really invested in it at this stage based on what I've seen and the message that they're telling me they want you to hear.

It may be too late for *You Might Like This*. Company X has already begun the critical chain of events in a buyer's mind as to whether they'll pluck *You Might Like This* off a crowded shelf when it's released. It's already been labelled, the game is getting exposure in the press based on the limited hands-on and -off time everyone has had with it, and that's well before a demo hits the PSN. Sure, it's a spin-off (of sorts) but with THAT name it's already alluding to certain qualities that seem to be in short supply when the final product is in your PS3.

We have little doubt Company X are going to spend lots of cash marketing this game, but that you won't see much of that expenditure in *OPS* or other 'core' gaming publications. Check lifestyle press and cinema advertising.

This only sparks more questions. How much success would games enjoy if they were released with a truly blank slate and no sequel status? How much stock do YOU put in a name when you open your wallet? Let the rest of the team and I know. We Might Just Like It. ☹

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# DOUBLE DIPPING

The DLC glut is getting out of control

Commerce in the virtual universe of *EVE Online* was recently brought to a standstill by an interstellar war – a mass revolt on a galactic scale. The major trade hubs of the *EVE* cosmos were lanced by laser death from the space fleets of the MMO's subscribers, united in disgust at the attitude of developer CCP. You see, an internal company newsletter had leaked to the internet suggested plans for shaking down customers for every last DLC dollar it could get its hands on. Not just for vanity items, but for ships and weapons, too – paid items that could potentially break the game. The mere suggestion that CCP may begin offering "pay-to-win" virtual items for sale in *EVE Online* triggered riots and brought the game's robust economy to a standstill.

The custom designer wear was bad enough, (\$70 for a monocle? Really?) but what really got the goat of all those *EVE* fans was the danger of other players buying 'golden bullets,' as it were. This is a game world of staggering complexity; of shady deals and warring mega-corporations; *Battlestar Galactica* meets *Wall Street*. If spoiled rich kids could suddenly buy their own death stars it would run everything. CCP has since stressed the alleged cash-for-cannons plans are bunk, but they are unrepentant. And they are not alone.

Across the net, and across the globe, gaming is evolving from being a product to being a service. With this trend comes the temptation to strangle the goose that lays the golden eggs: the customer. Executives pirouette around tent-poles like *Call of Duty Elite*, a service that aims to charge for the kinds of benefits that *Battlefield 3* owners will get for free with *Battlelog*. Like Veruca Salt, these money-grubbers cry: "Don't care how! I want it now!"

This is a tragedy, because it is avoidable. You don't guarantee mega-profits by shafting your customers. Instead – and stop me if this sounds crazy – you give

them what they want. Consider the genius of the regular Steam sales on PC. Seeing a game for 90%-off short-circuits the brain in exactly the same way as those candy bars by the check-out. A typical PC gamer will tell you that thanks to the Steam sales he owns dozens of games he's never played, and probably never will. But they were a bargain, so he's happy. The publishers never would've got his cash otherwise, so they're happy. Steam gets a cut, so they're happy too. Everybody wins.

Contrast that with what CCP may yet foist on PS3 gamers who sign on for *Dust 514*. If the *EVE Online* debacle is anything to go by, we can look forward to paying real-world prices for imaginary designer jeans, and an endless succession of defeats at the hands of those with more money than sense.

What's really heart-breaking is that we're seeing this sort of behaviour from companies that should know better. I've put up with Day 1 DLC, and online activation for pre-owned games, and even the 'downloadable' multi-player mode in *RE5*. But the minute you start charging me for bullets, I'm gone.

We gamers may not be rich, but we're not stupid, either – burn your customers, you burn your bridges. [↩](#)

**"The mere suggestion that CCP may begin offering "pay-to-win" virtual items for sale in *EVE Online* triggered riots and brought the game's robust economy to a standstill"**



## OPINION Angry Sackboy

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist. He may be small but he's unconvinced by a future dominated by microtransactions.

# PLATINUM DOUBLE PACKS

Prepare For This Year's Blockbuster Sequels - Play The Originals



**UNCHARTED**



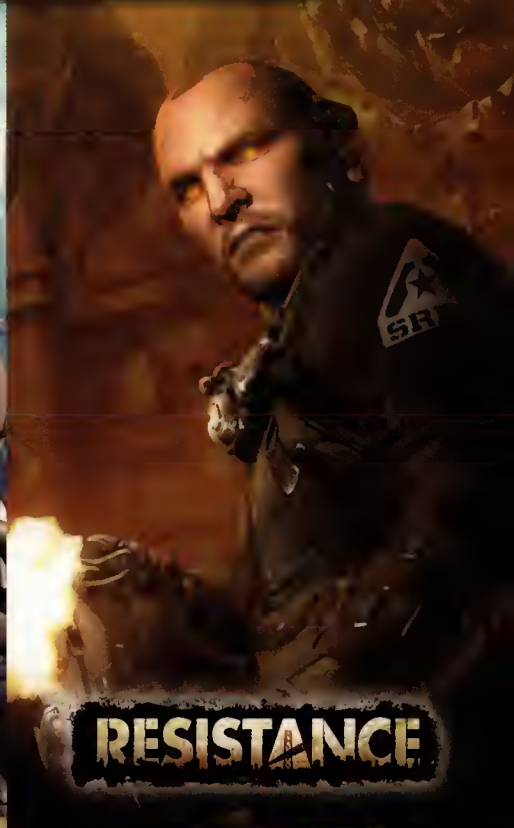
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune  
+ Uncharted 2: Among Thieves



**RATCHET  
& CLANK**



Ratchet & Clank: Tools of Destruction  
+ Ratchet & Clank: A Crack in Time



**RESISTANCE**



Resistance: Fall of Man  
+ Resistance 2

DOUBLE PACKS IN STORES AUGUST 4<sup>TH</sup>



PlayStation 3

**SONY**  
make.believe

# inbOX



## ▼ LETTER OF THE MONTH

# VISUALCALYPSE

**H**I OPS,  
First of all, love the mag. Keep up the good work and don't let me down! Now, I recently got to play *Crysis* in 1080p HD on a rather amazing computer (it would have to be amazing to run *Crysis*) and I was rather disappointed. I mean it looked so pretty and everything, but it looked too real.

I personally prefer the cartoony and obviously animated look most games have to them. But nowadays every developer seems to want their game to look realer than life itself. Personally, I find it wrecks the spirit of the experience. If I wanted realistic graphics, I would go outside and take my dog for a walk, not get into a game.

And I'm not saying that I hate any graphics that are close to being realistic. I am fine with *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*'s graphics or *FIFA*, and what not. But only insofar as you can tell that difference between real and fake at a simple glance.

That isn't to say that *Crysis* displays perfect realism (sometimes the background graphics will look so real your character's sci-fi armoured hand looks out of place and a little silly in the context of the jungle environment).

But at the end of the day I guess it's really up to the person and what they prefer. I just hope that I won't be forced to play these over-realistic games in the future when technology will take us to a whole new level of graphics.

**Michael Bonvino**, via email

**Mike, we didn't give you letter of the month because we agree with your apparent dislike of super next-gen graphics. Frankly, we love nothing better than turning on a PS3 game and 1080p-ing in our pants.**

**Nor did we give you this honour because you admitted to playing a prequel (on a PC of all things) to *Crysis 2*, a game that seduces eyeballs just fine on a PS3.**

**What did capture our imagination was your comment about "the future" in that last paragraph of yours.**

**The fact of the matter is that the next generation of consoles will throw polygons around like a bull would midget cowboys. And when everybody will be able to deliver photorealism, where the hell will we go for some visual variety?**

**You made us think. That's rare.**



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A COPY OF:

## F.E.A.R. 3

Not big on photorealistic graphics? We have just the thing...

## Modern whatfare?

Dear OPS,

I've been following your mag since the good old days of PSone and I've loved every issue. The thing that really made my day recently though, were the solid opinions of Luke and Angry Sackboy. I've been a gamer for years and this generation has blown me away with quality titles even though there has been one thing that really gets on my nerves. Online.

Finally I see that I'm not alone in missing the good old days when you could spend hours trash talking a mate in a splitscreen multiplayer blast. It seems to me developers have forgotten this in favour of cheap CoD rip offs. I've tried CoD and it wasn't for me. I like to think that I'm pretty good at shooters but its not fun getting owned by a 13-year-old camping in the only sniper position on the map.

I mostly buy games for the awesome narrative and story and I've always seen multiplayer as an afterthought. That's why it pains me when I wait ages for a game, only to get to the end of it in two days. This is due to developers adding a multiplayer to 'rival the best' when they could be focusing on improving features of their single player or making it longer.

Of course there are exceptions like *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, *Uncharted*, *God of War III* and the recent *L.A. Noire*. All astonishing games that focused on single player and won!

Please developers, you must realise there are gamers who buy games for the single-player experience. I'm proud to admit that I own *Black Ops* for the intense campaign mode and occasional splitscreen Nazi Zombies. Four-player Nazi Zombies really shouldn't have been an online exclusive feature, but at least splitscreen wasn't ditched completely.

I'm a huge fan of the *Uncharted* games and I'm sure the next one will dominate again. In saying that I'm a little worried at the 'multiplayer reveal' Naughty Dog has given OPS readers. It seems to be a strong focus this time around and I hope they remember WHY *Uncharted* is so beloved by ps3 gamers. Fingers crossed my jaw doesn't leave the ground like the first two titles.

**Dan Hill**, via email

**You make some very good points but we have every faith that Naughty Dog is focused on delivering a superb single-player experience.**

## Parenthood

Hi OPS,

I admit to be a *Call of Duty* person and have been playing *Black Ops* for nearly one year. I especially couldn't breathe when I saw the trailers and gameplay of the *MW3* campaign levels "Black Tuesday" and "Hunter Killer". But zombies is what I love about *CoD* so far. Knifing bodies and teabagging them after is awesome.

However, I downloaded the Welcome Back PSN Plus Package and bought *Burnout Paradise* for free. I pass by this game in shops, and always see your 9 rating of it, but I never bought it because I already have *Gran Turismo 5*.

The graphics in this were stunning and improved even more after the 1.9v update. My mouth was agape as my car crashed into pesky traffic, with flying debris everywhere and the glass shattering. The unrealistic components of the game were amazing as I survived a 30-metre high jump from a cliff and I had huge impacts that would have killed the driver (but if you look carefully, there is nobody driving the car). In this game, there was something that motivated me to move on from the other games like *CoD*.

E3 was one of my biggest dreams to go to since I was a young kid. I was able to go there for the entire time this year, and it was unbelievable. The games like *Modern Warfare 3*, *Skyrim*, *Battlefield 3*, *Uncharted 3* and *Assassin's Creed Revelations*

## Speak to us!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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Any game that lets you drive this is fine with us

## “I’m addicted and it’s leading me to the point of experiences being ruined”

gameplay was mindblowing and my time there was like being in heaven. But sadly, I didn’t see Paul in the midst of the crowd.

One more thing. I was talking to my mates and they thought that *inFAMOUS 2* was better than *L.A. Noire*. I followed your Essential rating and bought it. Rockstar really put a lot of effort in it and I loved it. However, *inFAMOUS* is more well known for me and is one of the best games I have. I hope I get *inFAMOUS 2* soon! So far, *L.A. Noire* is on the top of my chart.

Thanks *OPS* for giving me that hint of pure Australian magazine reviews and gaming goodness!

**Jeremy Kendy**, via email

**Good call. Burnout Paradise was (and continues to be) a rad game that too many people underrated. You were at E3 too? Should have told us, Paul would have stopped stalking developers from the L.A. Convention Centre rafters long enough to say hi. Next year, perhaps.**

## Going straight to the pool room

Hey *OPS*,

Collecting Trophies is something that we all enjoy and love. Collecting that one more to improve your rank, beat your friends in a personal battle or a war. We all undoubtedly love Trophies but have they become something that is now ruining our gaming experience?

I for one play games for Trophies. But I get distracted by them reading the list and trying to collect them, losing the actual gaming experience. When I choose the game I am going to play I first look at which games I need Trophies for and because of this *Assassins Creed* has been left behind. People now buy really bad games which are never meant to do well, just for an easy platinum like *Terminator Salvation*.

On the other hand Trophies have been beneficial for games and increased their value. Trophies or “achievements” have made appearances in all types of games and platforms with millions of people enjoying trying to collect them all. Trophies can add replay value to a game which otherwise would not be worth replaying and adds an edge to the experience.

It also gives a reason to collect all the collectibles or do the crazy stuff some Trophies require; this added content can be good for short games like *Homefront*.

I really love Trophies and believe it is one of the smartest decisions made this generation. I also recognise that I have become addicted and it’s leading me to the point where some experiences are being

ruined. I know Trophies will stay and I will want to collect every last one.

**Josh Rochford**, via email

**You’ve hit the nail on the head there Josh; Trophies are a double-edged sword. Honestly, we were into them to begin with, but having to play games across multiple machines (as we review games on special debug consoles) has split our chances of creating big piles of them. On one single PSN account, at least.**

**As such we’re removed from the phenomenon a bit. Mind you, we’ll challenge each other to get the cooler ones. You should continue to collect them for as long as it’s fun, though we would never condone buying turd-like games to increase your e-pene.**

**Why? Because if enough people continue to do that it’ll upset the delicate balance that is the videogame retail foodchain. The sickly, weaker games are meant to die from cash starvation. Feeding them and making them succeed**

will eventually be damaging to the wider ecosystem. ‘Bad’ will become ‘acceptable’ and it’ll choke off publisher support for great games. Think about it.

## Score war?

Howdy *OPS*,

I’m David Cargill and I read this PlayStation magazine every month and I own a PlayStation 3 and play it very day.

I read last month’s PlayStation magazine and saw that you guys reviewed *Duke Nukem Forever* and you gave it a 5 out 10.

I believe this is low score as I have played *DNF* and believe it is at least a 7 out of 10 because the gameplay and graphics are good (but yeah, the loading screens take too long).

I also believe that the ratings you gave *Alice: Madness Returns* (7 out of 10) and *LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean* (another 7) were too high. I believe *Alice: Madness Returns* was worth no more than 5 and *LEGO Pirates* was worth about a 6.

I just thought that you would like to hear my opinion on this and I would also like to hear back from you on this matter.

**David Cargill**, via email

**Sure David, we’re always interested in hearing reader opinions. However, at the best of times scores can be a pretty arbitrary yardstick to judge stuff by (but we do it anyway). What will always matter more is the text of a review.**

**If those words give you a fair indication of what you found to be true about the same game then you should make a mental note to stick with that particular reviewer and/or magazine as clearly your tastes both align. Our scores are just a basic reflection of our rating criteria, use the text to see how we really feel.**

## Cuttings

### ► Tanks!

Hey guys, forgot to say thanks for the *Battlefield 3* tank run in HD. It’s amazing! EA games on surround sound amaze me. I don’t know how they do it!

**Chris Farrelly**, via Facebook

**We couldn’t concur more.**

**You haven’t experienced a battlefield until you’ve played a Battlefield game with some Dolby wrapped around you.**

### ► Old school

Guys, loved the editorial at the start of the mag! Brought back memories. Commander Keen, Chuck Yeager and Syndicate all had their place on my PC. Feels like forever ago!

**Joel Phillips**, via Facebook

**It’s important to appreciate where you came from. Also, there’s a very widespread rumour that Syndicate will be coming back. Soon.**

### ► Massive Mass love

A sure sign of a good game: it starts messing with your dreams. I have been *Mass Effect-ed* and loving every minute of it.

**Oliver Josephs**, via Facebook

**You got that straight, good games should invade your brain. We’ve forgotten how many times a day we’ve closed our eyes and liaised with Liara and... no wait. We’re disturbing ourselves.**

# Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia on facebook

## ▼ Storefront

What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Jordan Madgwick  
**F.E.A.R. 3**

“There are not many scary moments but it’s fun”



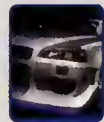
Che Patterson  
**Brütal Legend**

“Because it resembles the stuff in my dreams”



Chris Wyatt  
**Alpha Protocol**

“Because it was a bargain and it’s overly enjoyable”



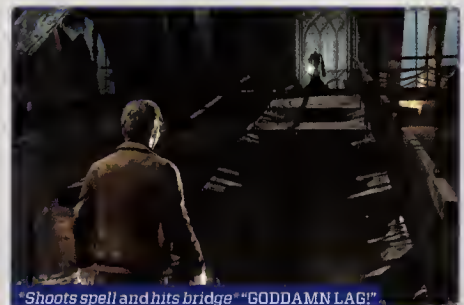
Matthew Cooper  
**Batman: Arkham Asylum**

“I don’t know why I didn’t get it before, it is awesome”

## Caption This ►

You put the words to the screen. Simple.

**Matt Williams** chimes in and reminds us what nobody’s missing from our single-player games



“Shoots spell and hits bridge” “GODDAMN LAG!”

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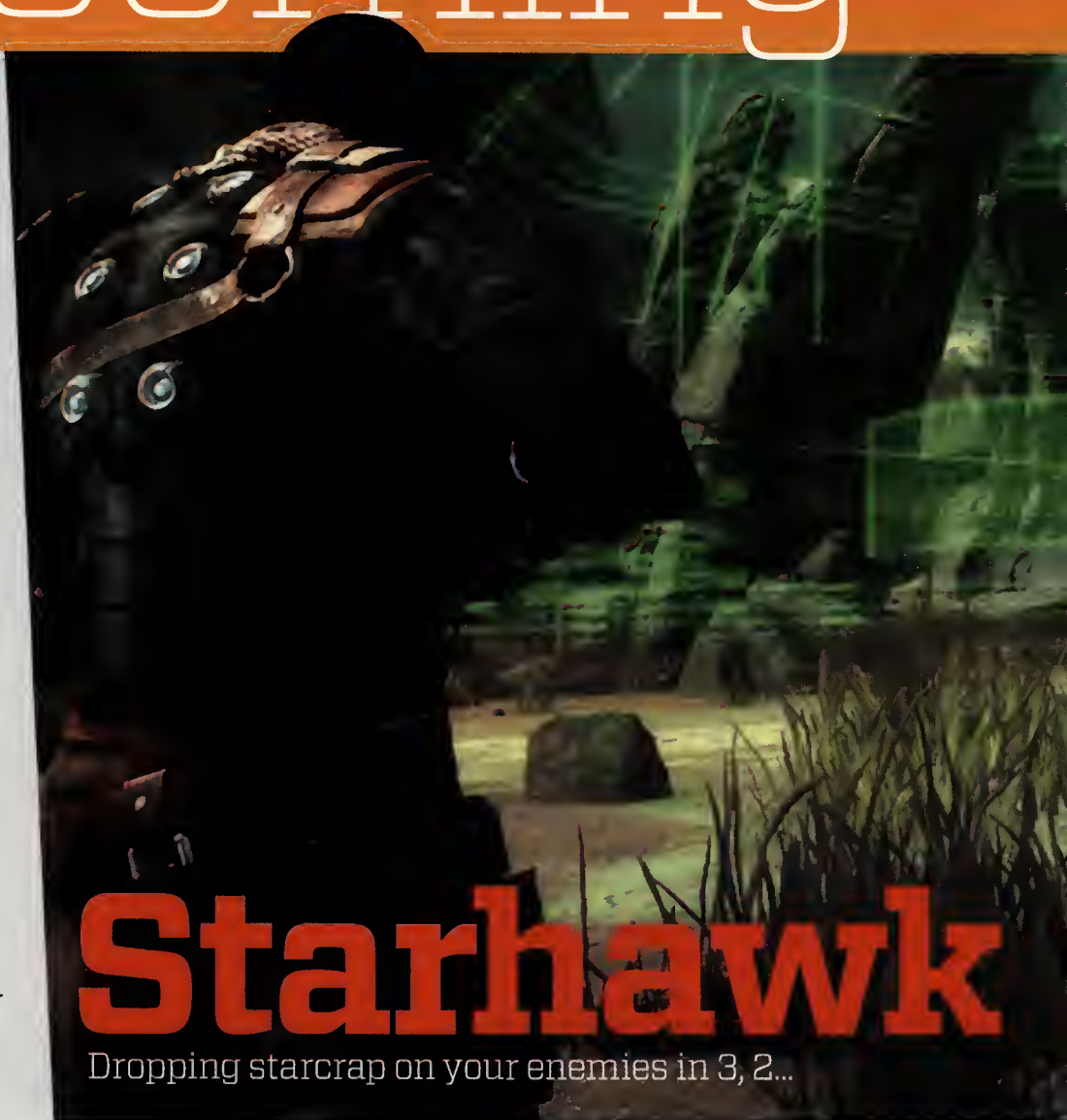
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# in coming

## This Month

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With a name like *Starhawk*, you'd earn zero respect points for guessing this is a space-based spiritual successor to *Warhawk*. Conversely, you'd earn a million points if you guessed this was heavily inspired by the eternal struggle between horticulture and the undead.

"I remember the day I was flying back from LA and playing *Plants vs. Zombies* on a portable console," Lightbox Interactive CEO, Dylan Jobe says. "It was the simple yet fun aesthetics of collecting and spending sun which got us thinking about our very simple economy in *Starhawk*. The idea that shooting buildings, enemies, and vehicles would yield the currency for our Build and Battle system and how it had to be gratifying to get paid. [This, along with] *PixelJunk Monsters* really inspired us for how we handle our Build and Battle currency."

So how does Build and Battle work exactly? Well, it's basically a pay-as-you-need-equipment mechanic in a similar vein to *Homefront* and it can be done whether you are on foot or in a vehicle. Whenever the slaughter isn't going your way you can create structures

such as bunkers, defenses, and armouries. It's even possible, while in the middle of a fight, to call up a menu and drop down a wall or to place automatic turrets. Our first impression of *Starhawk* was that it'll be like a RTS with a bit of third-person shooting, but Lightbox is quick to point out that emphasis is definitely kept much more on the shooting.

Building costs you rift energy and any arsenal of weapons, vehicles or fortifications you order will be violently delivered from an orbiting dropship. You might spend your hard-earned killing chits on a 4x4, a bad-arse hoverbike or your very own Hawk launch pad (which means no more getting gypped out of a ride by some idiot teammate who can't fly it worth a damn).

In practice, Build and Battle has the power to turn a two teams of eight CTF match into something refreshingly different from the norm. Once a team gets their head around the dynamic menu you'll be able to pump out a plethora of Hawks and vehicles onto the battlefield. With land-based vehicles starting to cut the distance to the respective flags in half, the next logical strategy is to evolve towards

It's gripping stuff to have what you want, when you need it and to see your hastily made plans bear victory fruit



**The Pitch**

So small in whatever you need to win

**Info**

**FORMAT:** PS3  
**GENRE:** SHOOTER  
**EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2012  
**DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY  
**DEVELOPER:** LIGHTBOX INTERACTIVE  
**PLAYERS:** 1-32

erecting walls and other choke points in the canyons surrounding the bunkers. Then, deploy a "bubble shield" defensive item around the bunkers which works as an EMP to disable vehicles and preventing mechanised foes from waltzing in for the flag. The only real sensible approach at this point is to organise a carrier vehicle strike to get as close as it could to disperse foot-based flag stealers.

Once one team manages to secure the prize and exit the shield you can call in a fleet of jeeps in via the attackers' menus to create a high-speed escape convoy. To make the getaway complete you can get a bunch of teammates to run interference by spawning sniper towers to cover the retreat. It really is gripping stuff to have what you want, when you need it and to see your hastily made plans bear delicious victory fruit.

The flow of battle is also helped by *Starhawk's* respawning mechanic, which bears a lot of similarities to *Section 8*. Any returning player is air dropped back onto the battlefield by designating a spot

anywhere on their side of the conflict (and you may even guide your pods descent as it's burning back into the battle). The idea of course is that if you know the map, and where that camping sniper murdered you from, you can effectively get meteor revenge by thundering back down to earth on top of his stupid head.

Another notable change that separates this from *Warhawk* is the inclusion of a single-player story mode, which apparently was intended to be included in *Warhawk* but was dropped. *Starhawk* will take place in a distant colony called the Frontier, a blighted place that has only just survived a massive cataclysm called The Rush. This apocalyptic event was caused when all of the rift energy (or 'space oil') miners, commonly known as Riffers, furiously harvested said volatile element only to be transformed into mutants.

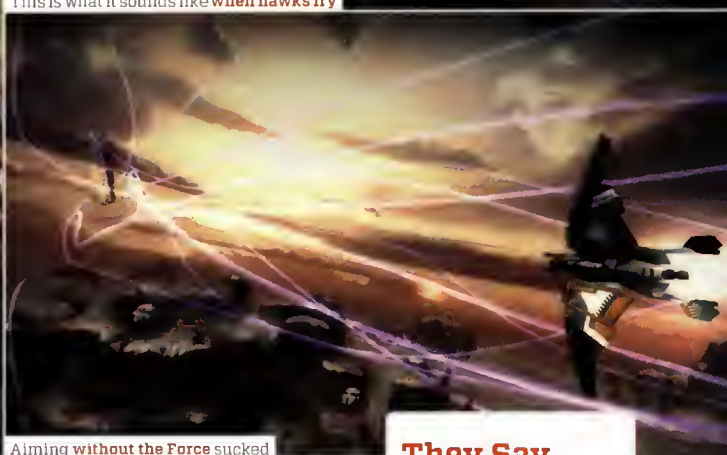
Enter you: Emmett Graves, a miner who was running a small family business with his brother until you were both attacked by an "Outcast warband" (read: flock of mutated crazies). During the fierce melee



If magpie attacks **have taught us nothing else**, you're going down buggy boy



This is what it sounds like **when hawks fry**



Aiming **without the Force** sucked

the brother's mining equipment goes haywire causing an explosion that partially infects them with rift energy and slightly corrupts their bodies.

Bearing the superficial marks of minor mutation the two are ostracised by "the normals" and decided to become interstellar gunslingers who shoot first in cantinas and forget to conduct a survey afterwards. It's during this entrepreneurial endeavour that the two find themselves in the White Sands, a distant colony on the moon of Dust, which fate soon decides is the right place for the wrong sort of hero.

Everything we've seen thus far about *Starhawk*, be it single or multiplayer focused, looks to be of the highest calibre. We also love that the Hawks are now giant mechs (which pack missiles on one arm and a machine gun on the other) which can convert into jet fighter form. We can't wait for *Starhawk* to swoop down and dig its claws deep into our social calendar. **Adam Mathew**

**They Say**

"RTS elements wrapped around the centre of what made *Warhawk* special; fast, arcadey gameplay"

**We Say**

The unique online multiplayer (plus 4-player split!) has got us intrigued. But we think it's the inclusion of a single-player that will add the most value to this franchise.

**Verdict**

BAD SHAPE  
 NEEDS WORK  
 GOT POTENTIAL  
 LOOKING GOOD

**GREAT STUFF**

SURE-THING

It's a tough town for cops: everybody has the same numberplate

# Driver: San Francisco

2011's true surprise packet flexes its multiplayer muscle

## The Pitch

Vehicle-based multiplayer like none you've ever played

## Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: DRIVING

EXPECTED RELEASE:

SEPTEMBER 2 2011

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT

REFLECTIONS

PLAYERS: 1-8

Shooters like *Battlefield 3* and *Modern Warfare 3* are going to hog most of 2011's multiplayer bandwidth. That's just the nature of things; as far as e-sports go shooters reign supreme. If past instalments are any measure they'll be top quality competitive experiences loved by the large communities of players each will inevitably amass.

Believe us, however, when we say that 2011's most exciting new multiplayer experience is *not* a shooter. There are no killstreaks. There's no teabagging. There's no camping. None of that at all.

*Driver: San Francisco* features the most

addictive multiplayer component we've played in recent memory, and all without a single firearm to be seen. There is a weapon in it with six barrels, but it's no gun. It's the Hemi under the hood of the game's 1970 Dodge Challenger R/T Six Pack; the Six Pack moniker thanks to its trio of two-barrel carburetors.

Developer Reflections has taken *Driver*, a series that has been losing its way since its remarkable debut back in 1999, and imbued it with some of the most manic multiplayer imaginable. It's all thanks to *Driver: San Francisco's* bizarre yet ingenious shift mechanic.

We played three of the game's online multiplayer modes (the final game is set to ship with 19 different multiplayer modes, including online competitive modes, split-screen competitive modes and split-screen cooperative modes).

The first, Tag, was the mode Reflections took to E3 and it remains incredibly fun. Picture a giant game of tag, in cars. Now picture it in a huge, bustling city. Got it? Now imagine, when you're 'It', everybody hunting you down is an Agent from *The Matrix*. That's the best way we can describe it.

While you're 'It' you're confined to whatever car you're driving at the time. Your



## Getting the drift

More from Martin Edmondson, creative director on *Driver: San Francisco* at Ubisoft Reflections.

### Are all of the cars available to begin with?

Potentially yes, but you will find that they are very rare in certain areas of the city. And we have a complex system of spooling traffic vehicles in and out that manages to achieve more realistic variety than previous driver games and often results in you seeing a vehicle for a fleeting moment that you have not seen for a very long period of time, just as in real life. It's well worth keeping your eyes peeled. And as you progress through the game you are able to permanently acquire cars and store them in your garages for easy access later in one of the many challenges littered around the city.

### Cars are damageable? Can they be destroyed? Repaired? Tuned? Personalised?

Yes, all cars can be damaged, and in a very realistic manner too, not just a few scratches. If you crash the car heavily you will really see the effect of that with buckling of the fenders/wings and the hood. Wheels and panels can be lost. Cause enough damage to a car and you will eventually render it un-drivable. It is not possible to actively tune a car but what we do is feature several cars in various levels of tune. The Lamborghini Murcielago for example can be found in both its standard form and the SV state of tune.



Porsche, RUF - same difference, right? Right?



Bin night: best night of the week



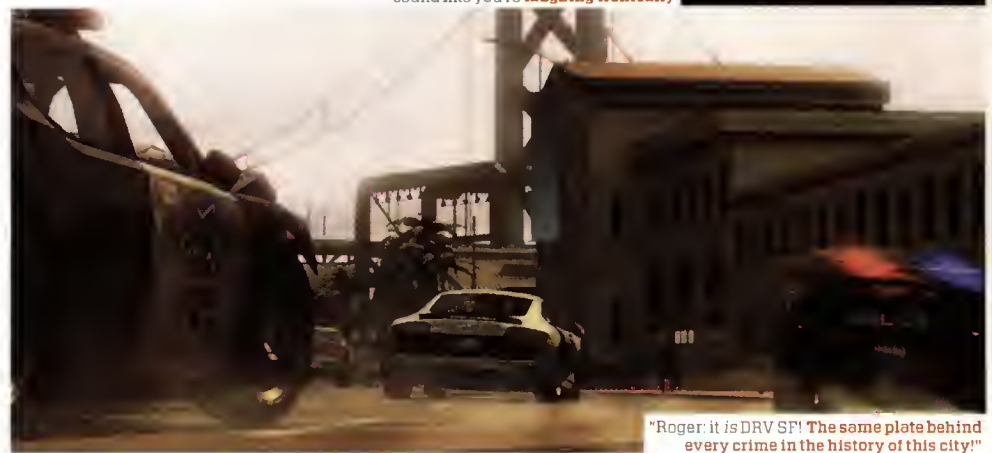
Baja: pronounce it right and you sound like you're laughing ironically

**“There’s no downtime. You never have to languish isolated or lost. This really is a driving game like no other”**

pursuers, however, can shift to any other car on the road. In a heartbeat, any nearby vehicle can become a threat. One minute you’re scorching down the road with a few opponents hot on your heels, the next minute the same players are coming at you from all angles.

One of the things we love most about Tag is that it’s just as much fun whether you’re ‘It’ or not. When you’re ‘It’ tension runs high; you’re being hunted and the whole world is your enemy. When you’re not it’s a game of canny strategy and well-timed movements. Floating above the streets you can watch the tagged car weaving through the traffic. Will you shift into a car travelling in the same direction and try to pick up the pursuit, or will you shift into an oncoming car up ahead and go for a suicidal head-on? Are there any cross streets coming up? Perhaps you can shift into a car and nail a teeth-shattering T-bone at the next intersection; we found these sorts of hits did make for the best getaways.

The next mode, Takedown, placed one player in a getaway vehicle and cast the remaining players as cops. The getaway driver needs to make it to a series of drop points dotted around the map before the cops wreck their car. Like Tag, the pursuing players can shift to other cars when necessary. Also like Tag it allows players to teleport around without a solitary hint of slowdown or lag, and Takedown actually



“Roger: it is DRV SF! The same plate behind every crime in the history of this city!”

even replaces commandeered civilian cars with the patrol car model – drawing it in, like a hologram, on the fly.

Trailblazer was the third and final mode we played. There’s a car beetling around the city leaving two streaks of yellow light in its wake, a DeLorean no less. The idea is to tuck in behind it and allow said trails to be ‘absorbed’ by your car. You accrue points by remaining in the path of the streaks of light. The catch is your car blocks the light from the other players so the result is a constant fight for prime position right behind the DeLorean; it’s a hilarious jostle for

second place. One second you might be slipstreaming the DeLorean, doorhandle-to-doorhandle with another player trying to grind you out of the way, when a huge, previously-dormant truck springs to life and shunts you both onto the curb. Like all the modes, though, you’re never out of the running. It only takes a few seconds to shift into a better-positioned vehicle and be right back in the action. There’s no downtime. You never have to languish isolated or lost. This really is a driving game like no other.

Want. **👉 Luke Reilly**

**Are there special cars to unlock? How are they unlocked?**

Yes there are. Throughout the progression of the game we gradually make cars available for ‘purchase’. These cars can be stored in one of your garages for later quick access. Then there are additional cars that are unlocked via retailer unique keys. However these unique key cars are all eventually unlocked throughout normal progression regardless of the retailer you purchased the game from, it will just take a bit longer to get your hands on them. And we also have a unique car which is unlocked via the Uplay rewards system.

**Can the game be played with a steering wheel controller?**

No, it can’t and the reason for this is that

driving the cars in *Driver* is very different to driving in a racing game. The inputs necessary for weaving between the traffic and throwing the car into constant 90 degree bend slides is seriously hard work. The game is actually bordering on impossible to play on any kind of force feedback steering wheel and even a lighter sprung loaded wheel leaves the player sweating after just one mission!

**Is *Driver: San Francisco* in 3D?**

No it’s not. I think with issues of the darkness of the screen and the frame rate issues, 3D has a little way to go before it is a genuinely great experience. Some of our particle systems (smoke, etc.) and scenery objects (like trees, for example) were designed to be as fast as possible to render

but do not translate effectively to 3D. In fact our high-speed render cheat for trees look really awful in 3D!

**Are there trollies in the game?**

Sadly, no. We did have them early in development (you can still see the tram lines) but took the decision to remove them and spend the memory on an additional type of car driving around the streets to give that touch more variety in the choice of vehicles you see and can shift into, which I think most players will prefer.

**What kind of DLC do you have planned?**

There is no DLC planned... Everything is on the disc for all to enjoy!

**They Say**

“We’ve got more cars than most driving games”

**We Say**

They do, we feel like we shifted into all them. This is a multiplayer experience we can’t wait to take home for good.

**Verdict**

- BAD SHAPE
- NEEDS WORK
- GOT POTENTIAL
- LOOKING GOOD
- GREAT STUFF**
- SURE THING

In space, nobody can see you not look at explosions

# Dust 514

Service guarantees citizenship

## The Pitch

Starship Troopers minus the bug planets

## Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA

2012

DISTRIBUTOR: CCP GAMES

DEVELOPER: CCP GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-TBA

In a genre that's a veritable black hole of ambition *Dust 514* hopes to blast off and boldly go where no FPS has gone before. It's a game connected through *EVE Online*, a popular PC MMO and as you're headshotting fools in *Dust* you're actually determining the territory and control of a broader war that's focused on the dominance of planets. Frankly, we're fascinated to see how the effects from one game will directly affect that of the other.

The scary thing about the wider *EVE* universe is that it boasts 50,000 planets, though some of these are uninhabitable gas giants. Your ground-based stouches are obviously going to be taking place in places that have terrestrial features which allow humans to survive (long enough to

kill each other). Developer CCP is saying that the maximum player count per match hasn't been finalised yet, but will be somewhere "above 16 and below 265."

A planet will be deemed conquered when you and your merc buddies kill everyone off and control a structure called a 'Space Elevator' which allows you to move resources from the ground to your space-based overlords in *EVE Online*. Haulin' arse and gettin' paid for these 'resource contracts' means you'll have more dinero to spend on pre-planning equipment before a match. You may want to pimp out your guns, or slap an 18mm canon on your moon buggy (along with a whole bunch of other offensive and defensive modules).

For example, a cool 1.4 million ISK will buy you in a 'Gunnlobi' Heavy Attack Vehicle. Want more money to splurge on better death machines? Conquer more planets soldier, and increase your ISK pocket money.

You aren't specifically told what class you should be in *Dust 514*, you decide how you want to roll with your equipped implants and modules. You'll also get to determine how you want your *Dust* mercenary to evolve using a skill training mechanic similar to most other MMOs.

*EVE Online* and *Dust 514* players will communicate their plights in the universe via a social networking tool on *cosmos.com*. Currently the developer doesn't "see a lot of sense" in both groups interacting

## All your monies are belong to ME

*EVE Online* allows you to discover, explore and dominate an amazing science fiction universe while you fight, trade, form corporations and alliances. Also, if you are ruthless enough to scam people out of their hard-earned ISK (read: space money), it allows you to become a bonafide galactic super-villain.

*EVE Online* player "Cally" spent months running his own "EVE Intergalactic Bank (EIB)" which offered in-game loans for start-up *EVE* corporations and miners who wanted to buy tools, with interest rates and repayment plans.

Once his bank had acquired 790 billion ISK, (about \$170,000 USD for people willing to buy it with real money) he pulled a Christopher Skase and walked away with the lot. But whereas Skase made a runner for Spain, Cally retreated to a corner of the cosmos and spent a huge chunk of his stolen money on an absolute Death Star of a warship (minus any exhaust port vulnerabilities).

The remaining cash he spent on posting an astronomically large bounty on his own interstellar pirate head, just daring anyone in the universe to try and collect it. If he offers merc work in *Dust 514*, we'll sign up in a second and do the bidding of this Hank Scorpio.



Space Australia Post showed all the parcel care you'd expect





When in doubt **hide behind the heavily armoured tank** and act tough



Tank you very, very much



Dropships: they **drop... shit**

in real-time as one party fights on the planet while the other flies about in space. They do, however, expect to see a lot of communication on [cosmos.com](http://cosmos.com) with regards to preparation, planning and taking a side in the political intrigue of the EVE universe.

*Dust 514* is quite a bold vision and we're hoping against hope that the actual shooting itself can match the lofty overworld ambitions. From what we saw at E3 this thinking man's shooter is warp speeding in the right direction and we love that it's going way beyond individual player leaderboarding to make everybody a part of something bigger than mere kill/death ego. Frankly, signing up to become a starship trooper has never looked this compelling. Would you like to know more?

Adam Mathew

### They Say

"Vehicles and installations will be purchased with war points which are a non-persistent game currency and will allow each fight to have an escalation of war"

### We Say

Sounds good to us and it will help prevent players with "accumulated wealth" from dominating.

### Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
GOT POTENTIAL  
**LOOKING GOOD**  
GREAT STUFF  
SURE-THING

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# Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

Fragging off the beaten track, Drake-style

## The Pitch

Nathan Drake returns to be awesome *all over again*

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE

**EXPECTED RELEASE:**

NOVEMBER 3

**DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

**DEVELOPER:** NAUGHTY DOG

**PLAYERS:** 1-10

Let's face facts: even if *Uncharted 3* had no multiplayer component or, hell, one of those God-awful tacked-on bastards, you'd probably still love the game. But while *Uncharted 2* had a multiplayer component, it didn't hold our interest for too long. Naughty Dog, it seems, had sensed our flippant interest and has reignited our faith in *Uncharted 3*'s multiplayer with the recently released beta.

The main menu is split into five tabs. The first tab lets you do all your standard multiplayer fare along with some interesting new additions: change controls, do the matchmaking thing, access your player records and check out the *Call of Duty* 'Theater Mode'-like Cinema. The remaining four tabs all deal with social elements of the game: party, friends list, Facebook and game invites.

One of the neatest additions is 'Uncharted TV' that sits in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen. Anytime you're not playing, you'll be able to maximise this video feed with **M**, toggle mute on and off with **U** and skip through various channels of *Uncharted*-related goodness. There's gameplay footage on offer, behind-the-scenes and training videos, game trailers, and even a collection of top plays of the week. Get your skills up and you may even see

your gaming persona in lights.

Of the five play modes on offer—Team Deathmatch, Team Objective, Plunder (essentially Capture the Flag), Hardcore (no boosters and medal kickbacks) and Co-op Hunter Arena—we consistently found ourselves drawn back to the more classic play modes. Certain maps boasted multiple fighting zones, while others offered dynamic elements that opened new sections of the map.

The Airstrip level started with one team on a cargo plane with the back ramp down and the other team all around them in the back of moving trucks. The team occupying the cargo plane changed many times in the first section of this map. The map then moved into a cover-filled Airstrip where the bulk of the combat went down.

There are a range of little features that add to the overall fun factor of *Uncharted 3*'s multiplayer. An in-game buddy system lets you partner up with a mate or random player to gain an advantage on the battlefield. You can spawn directly on your buddy (when they're not in combat), while working together to take down enemies lets you perform a humiliating high-five over their corpse for extra cash and extra LOLs.

Naughty Dog has also included a clever balancing system: Power Plays. If one team starts to take too much of a lead, the game will instigate one of a number of Power Plays that offers the losing team a chance to bridge the gap, while the winning side can also score extra points/cash for maintaining dominance.

We installed at least three patches for the *Uncharted 3* multiplayer beta during our play time, which showed that Naughty Dog is constantly refining the multiplayer. From the outset, there were noticeable problems such as dodgy animations and weird melee hit registry, but the overall experience improved with each successive patch.

We can't wait to sink our teeth into the final result later in the year. **Nathan Lawrence**

## Fortune and glory

There are a lot of ways to earn extra cashola in *Uncharted 3*'s multiplayer that are thrown at you so generously you'll be swimming in your money vault Scrooge McDuck-styles in no time at all. Your overflowing coffers can be used to personalise your character's appearance, purchasing various boosters and medal kickbacks as well as buying weapon attachments and assigning them to a particular personalised weapon loadout. It's well worth taking the time in the loadout screen to tweak a variety of weapon/booster/medal kickback configurations to suit your playing style for the various multiplayer modes on offer.

## They Say

"You can play multiple play styles, and we have these massive set pieces that you can't get anywhere else. No other multiplayer title lets you jump from truck to truck while attacking a flying airplane"

## We Say

That's absolutely true and more's the pity.

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
GOT POTENTIAL  
LOOKING GOOD  
GREAT STUFF

**SURE-THING**



# Also inbound



## Dark Souls

**FORMAT:** PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION-RPG **EXPECTED RELEASE:** OCTOBER **DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS **DEVELOPER:** FROM SOFTWARE **PLAYERS:** 1-4

We just spent a whole afternoon at Namco Bandal Partners d'ying. A lot. *Demon's Souls* was hard. *Dark Souls* is harder.

There was a dragon on a bridge we encountered mere minutes into our preview we were told frankly to avoid because it'd kill us in the space of a fart. We were instead pushed through a series of dank corridors towards a large boar-like creature which killed us anyway.

It still feels very much like *Demon's Souls* but it seems to care even less about letting you finish it. Hardcore.

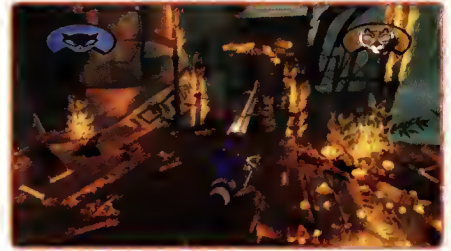


## Ace Combat Assault Horizon

**FORMAT:** PS3 **GENRE:** FLIGHT **EXPECTED RELEASE:** OCTOBER 13 **DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS **DEVELOPER:** PROJECT ACES **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

The game will feature a new 'Dogfight' mode which can be activated when you're close enough to a bandit. You'll automatically cling behind them leaving you free to make small adjustments and bombard them with missiles. When it's too close for missiles you'll need to switch to guns.

We don't know quite what to make of this mode; it's certainly fast-paced and thrilling – and the close-ups of ruined enemy aircraft are neat – but it feels a little simplistic to be honest.



## Sly Cooper Thieves in Time

**FORMAT:** PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2012 **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY **DEVELOPER:** SANZARU GAMES **PLAYERS:** 1

It's been six years since the release of *Sly 3*, the last Sly Cooper game. Developer Sucker Punch has since moved on to the *inFAMOUS* series but Sanzaru Games, who previously put together *The Sly Collection* for PS3, has been handed the reigns.

*Thieves in Time* looks a lot like its PS2 predecessors, but don't interpret that as an insult. The familiar look of Sly's world has been successfully recaptured. The irrepressibly prolific Nolan North will feature as a boss, a tiger called 'El Jefe'.



## Rugby World Cup 2011

**FORMAT:** PS3 **GENRE:** SPORTS **EXPECTED RELEASE:** AUGUST 25 **DISTRIBUTOR:** AIE **DEVELOPER:** HB STUDIOS **PLAYERS:** 1-4

Developed by HB Studios, the Canadian studio that developed four rugby games for EA between 2003 and 2007, *Rugby World Cup 2011* represents the studio's first self-funded full console title.

*Rugby World Cup 2011* will allow players to pick from the 20 Rugby World Cup 2011 participating countries, lead their team through the pool phase and make their way to the Final for the opportunity to lift the prestigious Webb Ellis Cup. It's been four years since the last rugby union game: *Rugby 08* on PS2.



## Wallabies Rugby Challenge

**FORMAT:** PS3 **GENRE:** SPORTS **EXPECTED RELEASE:** LATE 2011 **DISTRIBUTOR:** TRU-BLU GAMES **DEVELOPER:** SIDHE **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

*Wallabies Rugby Challenge* (*All Blacks Rugby Challenge* in New Zealand) is the second rugby title due out in time for the World Cup.

A Trans-Tasman production, developed by Wellington-based developer Sidhe (*Rugby League 2*) and published by Sydney-based Tru Blu Games, *Wallabies Rugby Challenge* will include the All Blacks, Qantas Wallabies, ITM Cup, Aviva Premiership, plus Super Rugby teams. Other licensed teams and comps are set to be announced as the game nears release.



## Birds of Steel

**FORMAT:** PS3 **GENRE:** FLIGHT **EXPECTED RELEASE:** EARLY 2012 **DISTRIBUTOR:** MINDSCAPE **DEVELOPER:** GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT **PLAYERS:** 1-16

This new IP from Konami is being developed by the mad Russians behind *IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey*, the highest-rated flight game on PS3 (even though no-one bought it).

Think of *Birds of Steel* as its spiritual successor: 100 real-life planes, four-player co-op, 16-player online, 20 historical missions (and a stack of fictional ones) spanning 15 classic aerial campaigns. Forget this H.A.W.X malarkey – dogfights were better when all Maverick had was a moustache and a wing full of machineguns.

# F1 2011

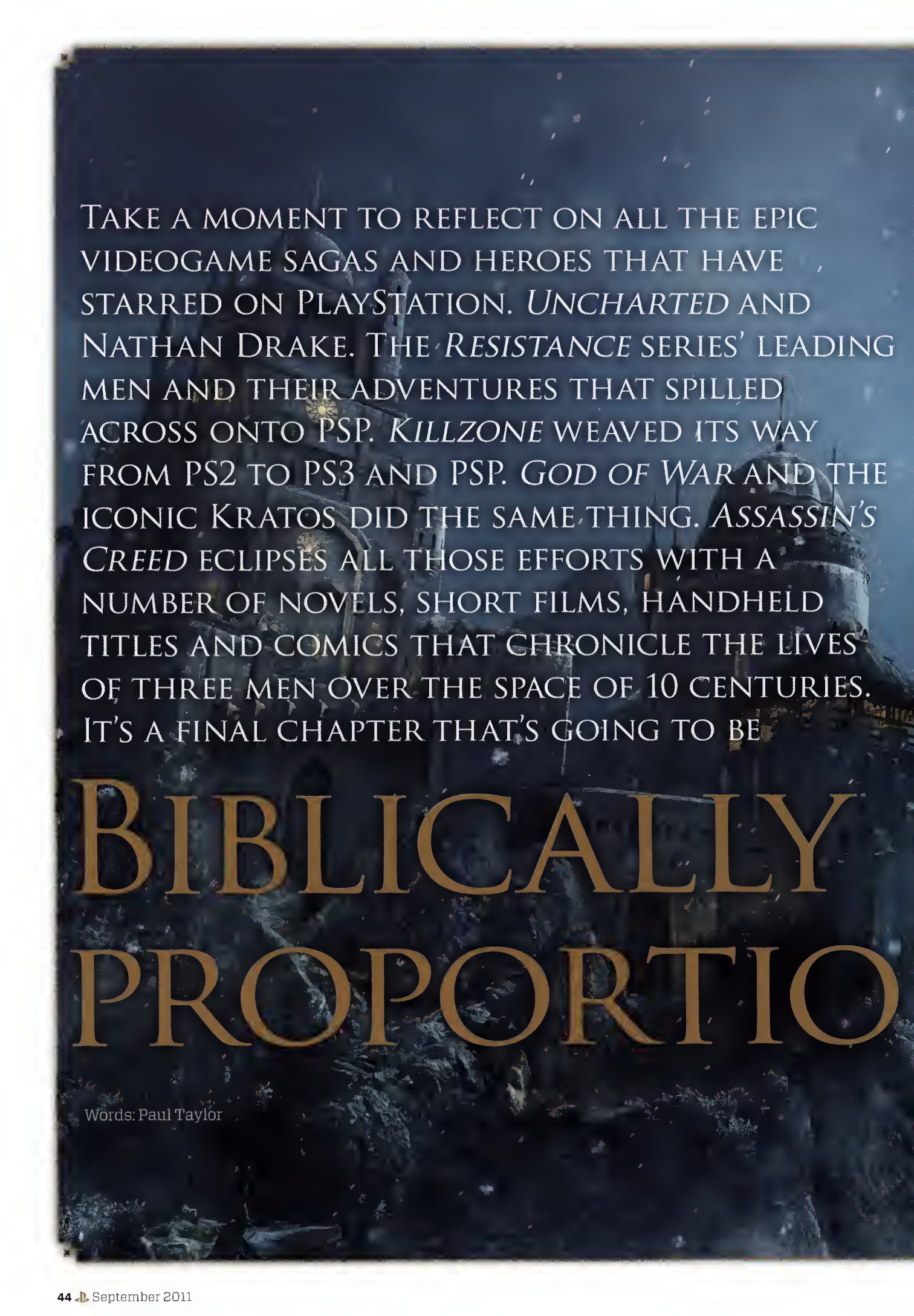
**FORMAT:** PS3 **GENRE:** RACING **EXPECTED RELEASE:** SEPTEMBER 23 **DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS **PLAYERS:** 1-16

Codemasters' new F1 franchise is headed into its sophomore season with a game promising to leave last year's impressive debut title for dead.

Multiplayer has been just one of the team's focal points in *F1 2011*. Like *DiRT 3*, *F1 2011* sees the return of splitscreen multiplayer. It also features the ability to hook up with a partner and race through an entire season together as a team, gunning for the Constructors' Championship but still trying to beat your teammate to the top of the podium at every opportunity. 16-player online races will also feature, with eight bots to ensure you have a full grid.

The new DRS and KERS systems are in place, mechanical failures will feature and dynamic cloud cover will affect tyre grip.





TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT ON ALL THE EPIC VIDEOGAME SAGAS AND HEROES THAT HAVE STARRED ON PLAYSTATION. *UNCHARTED* AND *NATHAN DRAKE*. THE *RESISTANCE* SERIES' LEADING MEN AND THEIR ADVENTURES THAT SPILLED ACROSS ONTO PSP. *KILLZONE* WEAVED ITS WAY FROM PS2 TO PS3 AND PSP. *GOD OF WAR* AND THE ICONIC KRATOS DID THE SAME THING. *ASSASSIN'S CREED* ECLIPSES ALL THOSE EFFORTS WITH A NUMBER OF NOVELS, SHORT FILMS, HANDHELD TITLES AND COMICS THAT CHRONICLE THE LIVES OF THREE MEN OVER THE SPACE OF 10 CENTURIES. IT'S A FINAL CHAPTER THAT'S GOING TO BE

# BIBLICALLY PROPORTIO

Words: Paul Taylor



NED

"THIS IS A STORY WITHIN A STORY, AND REVELATIONS IS GOING TO BE THE BIGGEST GAME IN THE ASSASSIN'S CREED STABLE."



### PAGES OF HISTORY

It's a sprawling series, but *Revelations* is trying to be like any good sequel. The challenge is appealing to newcomers who can treat it as its own self-contained unit, while fans invested in the story can delve in and unravel the mystery behind the chapters so far. Plus, the game itself is bound by the lore it created whilst still offering improved and new components in both gameplay and location.

Ezio, now in his 50s, is searching for the lost library of his ancestor Altaïr Ibn La'Ahad – the lead playable character from 2007's *Assassin's Creed* – in Masyaf, located in the Middle East. The veteran assassin learns that there's an artifact hidden inside the library that yields great power; if it falls into Templar hands it could destroy the Assassin order and control the destiny of humankind. If you've played the first *Assassin's Creed* you'll see the enormous, familiar stone fortress that was Altaïr's HQ, though the surrounding buildings have changed somewhat. It's also been swamped with Templar forces.

Ezio needs to locate five seals to get inside the library, and he subsequently discovers that the seals are in Constantinople. However, they're more than just keys, as they hold memories of, and through them Ezio can discover more about his forebearer – it also means players are going to take control of the original assassin one more time. "This is Ezio's last stand against the Templars, his last great battle," says Alexandre Amancio, Creative Director at Ubisoft Montreal. "Previous games have been leading up to this key moment in the character's life. *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* is the game that will uncover the alignment of the tangled destinies of Desmond, Ezio and to unlock 1st civilisation revelations."

### THE EXTRAS

Prince Suleiman (left) and Prince Ahmet, (right) are just one duo in the Ottoman empire that Ezio becomes tangled up with in *Revelations*.

There's still Desmond Miles to consider. Without spoiling too much, the 21st Century protagonist is in a metaphysical limbo somewhere within the Animus, a device that mega-corporation Abstergo are using to pry through his genetic memories trying to discover more about the Assassins and the Templars.

This is a story within a story, and *Revelations* is going to be the biggest game in the *Assassin's Creed* stable. A game that's been meticulously planned by its creators as they tie up the loose ends and yet present some new leads before launching into the inevitable *Assassin's Creed III*.

"Our games are strategically planned ahead of time in terms of narrative and gameplay," continues Amancio. "The beginning of *Assassin's Creed Revelations* development began in parallel to *Assassin's Creed II* and *Brotherhood*... [and is] built on strong core values. With such a strong vision, a universe that has so much potential and a dedicated and passionate team, we believe we can deliver a



In town with a few days to kill



The new hook of this game? A hook. So meta

compelling and satisfying story to our fans... Players who want to have a fun, linear storyline will be able to follow the story very easily. For players who want to dig deeper into the story, we have a fully-fledged, rich story with multiple layers. It's a very mature, rich story, yet we've taken all possible steps to make it feel accessible to newcomers."

## THE END OF THE BEGINNING

Each major *Assassin's* title brings a list of new and improved features to it, and while *Revelations* is tying together the saga it's still refining what came before it. Ubisoft is adding to Ezio's arsenal while also expanding the powers he has over the Brotherhood of Assassins. Fans of the excellent multiplayer addition first seen in *Brotherhood* should be thrilled that it's coming back but with a backstory to better complement and round out that half of the package.

Ezio's arsenal is evolving, and two of the

biggest additions to his collection of weaponry are the hookblade and smoke bombs. The new blade is a modification to his hidden blade that snaps out Ezio's forearms and opens up a new method of traversing the environment and also fighting guards. The city is dotted with ziplines between buildings, so as Ezio

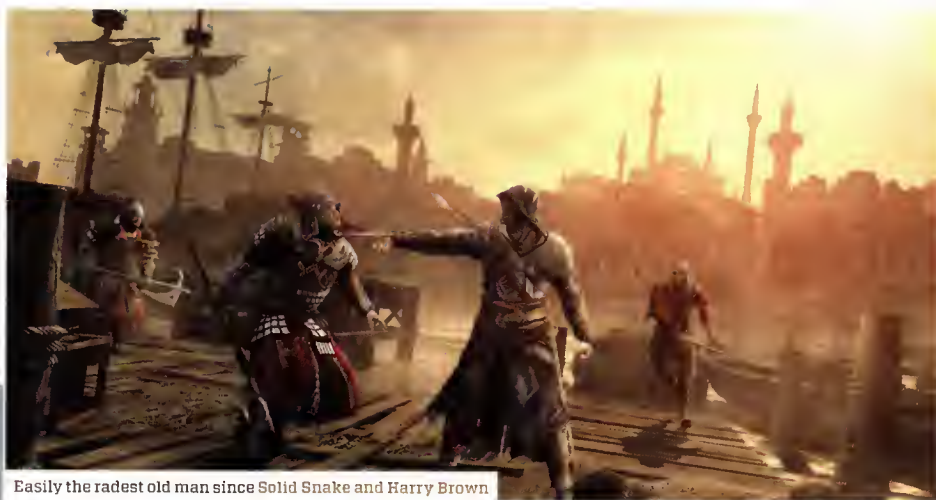


## APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

The *Assassin's* series has used trebuchets, cannons and most recently flamethrowers. What else is Ezio going to get his hands on in his quest against the Templars? Alexandre Amancio has this to say.

"As seen in the E3 demo, the Byzantine Empire used "Greek Fire" machines, an incendiary weapon typically used in naval battles. It was a very powerful and effective machine. The hand-held siphons used by Ezio appeared as early as the 10th Century and were used extensively by the Byzantines during naval warfare. As for the other machines, you'll have to wait closer to the game release to know more.

"I can confirm we will include more of these "wow" moments as we really are revamping presentation. It is an evolution in the series as the game includes multiple epic sequences with high production values - all playable like the demo. They are intense moments of high adventure punctuating your overall experience."



Easily the radest old man since Solid Snake and Harry Brown



## TALENT POOL

One of the biggest games ever made in the Ubisoft stables needs a group of talented individuals to make it shine. Alex Amancio (pictured) has been part of the Ubisoft Montreal team since 2005, and is the Creative Director on *Assassin's Creed Revelations*. Before commanding one of the lead roles on the project he was the Art Director on one of our favourite titles, *Far Cry 2*. Before games, he worked in the field of military grade flight simulators for such clients as NATO and the USAF.

Of course, it's more than a one-person operation. Staff have been drawn from other notable Ubisoft games, such as the *Splinter Cell* series, *Prince of Persia* and *Avatar: The Game*



### YUSUF

This hooded figure is Yusuf, the leader of the Constantinople order of Assassins. He's the guy who'll be showing Ezio to the city.



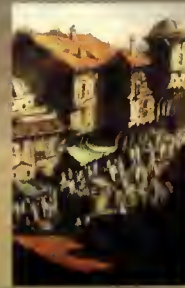
is storming across buildings he can extend the eagle-headed blade that hooks on to the lines, enabling fast travel. "Unlike traditional fast travel where you are passive as the world loads, with the zipline, you are active," says Amancio. "For example, you can unhook from the zipline and drop onto enemies for an air assassination."

We're expecting those air assassinations to be more than installing a metallic eagle's beak into an unlucky customer's skull – think gaining a lot of momentum and using the extra leverage to skittle an enemy. "It's a very dynamic and versatile weapon," enthuses Amancio. "In combat, it can be used to hook opponents in multiple ways. For example, as seen in the E3 demo, it can be used to hook and throw an enemy. Also, it can be used to steal from enemy soldiers during a fight. It is an extremely versatile weapon that will be used one second to zipline down a roof and the next to counter an enemy. It's very fun and

extremely satisfying."

As well as improving his melee options, Ezio will also craft bombs – over 300 different types according to the developer's claims – that can be adapted to your particular game-playing style. Although there's going to be a list of ingredients you need to follow, everything you pick up and toss into the pot can be useful. "Experimentation is key; sometimes happy mistakes are the most useful," explains Amancio. "However, there isn't an infinite amount of bombs. Each bomb must be crafted using components collected throughout the game. More common components are available in shops or in the Assassin dens. Others might be found only in a specific part of town, or by looting guards."

Lobbing a smoke bomb is going to confuse guards so that Ezio can either slip past them or use the cover to take them down. Plus, the master assassin has an evolved Eagle Sense that acts like a cross between instinct, intuition



## HOT IN THE CITY

If you've ever played an *Assassin's Creed* game you'll quickly learn that the location acts as a major character. The sprawl of buildings are an assassin's playground, and an open world provides benefits. But there's a major challenge to keep it interesting for players to explore. The series has represented Jerusalem, Acre, and Damascus in *Assassin's Creed*, through to parts of Italy including Venice, Florence, Forlì and the Tuscan countryside in *Assassin's Creed II*, and five distinct areas of Rome in *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*.

In *Revelations*, Ezio travels to Constantinople, described by Amancio as "the crossroads of the world". It's a city with rich history as the Greeks,

Romans and Ottomans have all had a stake in Constantinople, and it's gone through several name changes. As power has shifted from century to century and culture to culture, parts of the city have remained coloured by the people that lived there, and in-game it's split up into four distinct districts with particular architectural designs. It follows the formula of *Brotherhood* by having one tangible city but with several different sectors.

"The city is a great cosmopolitan metropolis, with inhabitants from different parts of the world forming a mosaic of cultures," says Amancio. "It is a very immersive city, it's crowded and exotic which makes the entire ambience unique. For

the first time in *Assassin's Creed* history, we have a city that is mostly built from wood – very ornate and busy in its design.

Within the confines of the city, four areas include Beyazid, Constantin, Imperial and Galata. Beyazid is a merchant quarter, Constantin holds the city's peasants with their dilapidated wooden houses peppered with ancient monuments. Imperial is more luxurious with towering marble structures and upper-class citizens, while Galata bleeds into Asia. Buried below ground is Cappadocia, a Templar city, and of course Ezio will spend time in the Middle Eastern city of Masyaf, hundreds of kilometres away.





Do your guards have earwax problems? Ezio has just the cusetip you *don't* need

and radar so that he can see through the haze. This Eagle Sense is also used to roughly guess the way that guards are going to walk so you can rush ahead and plan an ambush, or – incredibly – listen to the increased heartbeat of a traitor in a crowd.

We're only teased about what's possible beyond that, but we like where Ubisoft Montreal are headed. "Ezio's new arsenal is provided by the local assassins, who will teach the Italian hero a few new tricks," says Amancio. "You'll have to wait a little bit more to see what he will be carrying this time."

## O BROTHER

Ezio's clan of trained assassins, the Brotherhood, are back and their structure has been heavily tweaked to give them more power and personality than in *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*. Trainees now reach a level cap of 15, and you'll be able to fashion them just how you like. "There are more options to customise the assassins by selecting their weapons and their class," explains Amancio. "We also added more missions related to the assassins: new recruitment missions, as well as missions when they reach specific levels in their progression."

These recruits will still be able to take out enemies at the shake of Ezio's fist to avoid him getting his hands red, and they'll also be crucial to defending the Assassin dens within the city's borders. Much like the Borgia towers in *Brotherhood*, these dens are pivotal to commanding and retaining influence over the city and wresting control away from the Templars. Capture an area and you can upgrade both the buildings in the local area and also the den itself, adding more ziplines for faster travel. However, you need to monitor what is happening as the dens will attract

“AS WELL AS IMPROVING HIS MELEE OPTIONS, EZIO WILL ALSO CRAFT BOMBS – OVER 500 DIFFERENT TYPES ACCORDING TO THE DEVELOPER.”





# ASSASSIN'S CREED MULTIPLAYER

We also spoke to **Andreane Meunier**, online producer at Ubisoft about how the multiplayer mode in *Revelations* is going to blow you away

**OPS: You're focusing pretty extensively on multiplayer in ACR. How successful, do you feel, was the multiplayer element of Brotherhood? How much time or resources have you devoted to crafting the multiplayer element?**

**AM:** In *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, we tried our hand at multiplayer for the first time and received a warm welcome from our fans, as it allowed players to experience the franchise's core gameplays of navigation and assassination in new ways. With *Revelations*, we are building on our previous experience, taking the best parts, improving where we can and adding new content to bring more variety. We are fully dedicated to making an incredible multiplayer experience and we have a team in Annecy (France) with that specific mandate.

**OPS: What were the parts of the game that you wanted to improve from Brotherhood, and what have the fans asked for?**

**AM:** What we really wanted to add was an element that is a core part of *Assassin's Creed* that wasn't really pushed in *Brotherhood*, namely a strong story. In *Revelations*, players will assume the role of a Templar in training. As you progress in the multiplayer, Abstergo management will contact you and give you insider's information on the company and explanations on their operations. It is the first time we will get to see the Templar's side of the story and our fans are in for a treat!

**OPS: So what are your favourite parts of the multiplayer?**

**AM:** One of the things that I really like is that the kill animations will adapt to your style of gameplay. So, for example, if you approach your opponent stealthily a kill animation will be very short, and will allow you to get out

really fast. Whether if you run and attack by exposing yourself the animation will be more spectacular, a bit more Hollywood, but will also compromise you for a longer period. So the idea is to really start playing around with the different approaches, depending on the moments in the gameplay, basically what feels better and what you want to do.

**OPS: Tell us more about the team's philosophy in crafting multiplayer. What was your focus on bringing people into the Assassin's Creed universe and away from the usual third and first-person titles that usually dominate gamers' consoles?**

**AM:** The team in France are really working on the multiplayer, their strategy is working solely on that, so that allowed them to adapt their take on the *Assassin's Creed* universe, and to really create new gameplay that was innovative and new, not just copy what other developers are doing. They really kept the key features of the core values of the brand, and expanded on what we felt was the universe of *Assassin's Creed*.

**OPS: What are the defining aspects of Assassin's Creed multiplayer, in that case?**

**AM:** *Assassin's Creed* is known for a great story, great graphics, good animation when you're blending in the crowd, parkour: we make sure that those key elements come through in the multiplayer.

**OPS: Is there a secret that you can tell us about multiplayer? We promise we won't share it with anyone else...**

**AM:** Well, we're working on a feature that I think will be interesting, which is a taunt feature. There may be a moment where you get really close to your opponent, and you make your kill, we're going to add a layer of taunting which means you will have a [moment to] show off and do your little 'touchdown dance'.



## TEMPLARS

The Renegade (left) and the Vanguard (right) are two Templar multiplayer characters you'll learn about only during the online modes



"WE HAVE A CINEMATIC SHADER IN CUT SCENES WHICH ENABLES US TO SHOW PORES AND SCAR DETAILS, AND ALL OF THE OTHER IN-GAME GRAPHICS WHICH HAVE BEEN IMPROVED"

Constantinople? 'More like 'Cant-stand'll-topple'. Amirite?

attention and their control could be lost. Do yourself a favour and send a loyal follower to deal with the drama, or put a master assassin in charge of the den to maintain the peace.

You can also send these assassins outside of the city to fight the Templars in parts of Europe and Asia. These mechanics increase their rank and also net you rewards like money or bomb parts.

### SKIN DEEP

Ubisoft is also determined to make the final part of their mini trilogy sing visually. They want to achieve this not only through cinematic beats and in-game camera work but also through the way that actors are recorded and then portrayed as characters.


"We have a cinematic shader in cut scenes which enables us to show pores and scar details, and all of the other in-game graphics which have been improved," says Amancio. "The game is truly beautiful. We are also rethinking how we integrate performance of actors. We have a new tool called MOCAM,

created right here at Ubisoft, which captures key features in the actor's face and translates the performance directly into the in-game engine for cinematics.

MOCAM combines the usual methods of recording actor performance and facial capture. In a post-*L.A. Noire* world where the bar for realistic facial performances has been inexplicably raised it needs to be good. Utilising a helmet with a lens inside pointed at the actor's face, the software adapts itself to recognise that particular person's expressions and these can, with some help from animators, be translated onto various in-game characters. It means that the team can have one actor's performance recreated many times throughout the world with unique facial features.

The *Assassin's Creed* series has continually impressed critics and punters alike over the last four years. It's a series that's pushed at the edges of innovation and refined established conventions. It's made developers think about how characters interact with the gameworld, and has made the Renaissance cool. Ezio is

a charismatic character, and combined with stellar presentation and a plot riddled with mystery it's captured audiences.

As we're preparing to farewell this part of the series we're still presented with cryptic clues. "*Assassin's Creed Revelations* has 115 per cent more reveals than anything else," teases Amancio. What does it mean? Roll on November. 



### POWER OF SIX

*Assassin's Creed* has become a major part of Ubisoft's catalogue. However, there are six teams with Ubisoft working on *Assassin's Creed Revelations*. How are all the teams working together to make this as successful as *Assassin's Creed II* and *Brotherhood*? "It's not an easy task," explains Amancio, "But the key is the building of a strong initial vision and then constant reviewing and communication in order to ensure that the vision is being interpreted in the correct way by the various parties involved. The secret is constant communication. *Revelations* is being principally developed in Montreal. Ubisoft Quebec and Ubisoft Singapore are collaborating on the development of the single-player portion of the game. Ubisoft Ancey is developing multiplayer with collaboration from Ubisoft Bucharest. Ubisoft Massive is working on a new and unique offering for the game."



Prince of Persia is that way man, GTFO

# INSANE IN THE GAMEPLAY



▲ Jason VandenBerghe  
Narrative director, *Far Cry 3*

Ubisoft's open-world series returns to consoles against a backdrop of bloodshed and anarchy in a tropical paradise. **Jason VandenBerghe**, narrative director of *Far Cry 3* at Ubisoft Montreal, talks to us about the game, movies and games, and a new breed of hero

**OPS:** How is the team following on from the success of *Far Cry 2*? The massive open-world and Central African state in a shooter were definitely memorable elements, if not a first for the genre. The demo you showed at E3 was pretty shocking; what influenced the decision to go in that stylistic direction?

**JV:** So, we're huge fans of *Far Cry* and *Far Cry 2*, and we're using the *Far Cry 2* engine. We were completely inspired by the open-world success and for me I feel like *Far Cry 2* demonstrated two things. One, that games can tackle serious subjects and still be entertaining. When you started playing it you were like, "Wow, this is important." And then you get to the end and you think, 'Ambiguity? I'm left with ambiguity?! That's the conclusion? F--k you!' Fantastic. A real adult experience, and not 'adult' as in an [ESRB] M-rated sense, but in terms of it treating you like an adult.

**OPS:** Do you mean important themes?

**JV:** Yeah, that's right. You can feel it coming off of the game, really great stuff. Very inspiring, and it also said you can make a first-person open-world game, and it can be incredible. So, we're taking that as our basis but advancing it. So if you like that scale you're going to be very satisfied when you get your hands on *Far Cry 3*.

**OPS:** Is it all going to be on foot, or will you be jumping back into vehicles again?

**JV:** We're not revealing what exactly you're going to be driving this time around, but I can assure you the, uh... In the years that have passed since *Far Cry 2*, design itself has evolved and we've gotten better at making fast travel a big deal. It doesn't interfere with the experience, and I think there's a certain amount of realism you don't need. Don't worry; when you play *Far Cry 3* you're going to be able to get around. In a space that big you need to navigate through it in an easy way. More importantly than that, big is cool, but what players really need is dense. What we're trying to do with *Far Cry 3* is make sure that every square kilometre



"Um, we'll need that to land"

has something new and interesting around it. Our creative director asked us, "What if we took all the action and shooting out of that island, what if there were no people in it whatsoever? It should still be fun to go exploring." And then when you put the actual adventure back on top of that it'll be even better.

**OPS:** so what about the location? Is it a real world place?

**JV:** Yeah. The direction that *Far Cry 2* took the franchise is the right one, which is believable human conflict. A place inspired by a real place. I think that our source material is in the

south seas, and that's where this bad stuff is happening right now. We're not flinching from that. The island is in disputed territory, hasn't had a government – ever – it's one of those places where crime can happen unabated and has been happening for a long, long time. If you let your imagination roll you can fill in the blanks on the kind of stuff we're going to be talking about in the months to come.

Jason Brody is the hero and isn't on this island because of free will, but because his boat sunk and he's got to get the hell out of there, but like the previous games they both presented this fantasy of what I call 'man alone'. Like, I'm shipwrecked I need to get out of here, but there are bad men doing

bad things to good people here, someone needs to help, I can't call emergency services, no-one's going to help.

**OPS: So who is Jason Brody? We heard him talking, which you don't often get in shooters.**

**JV:** Yeah, it's tricky to have a character in first person that speaks. That's risky, and we're very sensitive that it works. What I can tell you is that we wanted to do a new kind of hero. Traditionally, when you start to think about this kind of setting you think about Bruce Willis or Indiana Jones; we wanted to do someone who was a native of the 21st Century, someone who grew up with the internet and this generation, and it's a different group. The world is changing around us and we wanted a hero for this time.

**OPS: There are a lot of heroes that are drawn from *Star Wars* and so on and so forth, but while it's great material it is 40 years old...**

**JV:** Exactly. As you saw from the demo he has a camera with him, and that tells you something about his personality, but also when he picked up the AK47 he knew how to use it effectively. The people he was shooting at aren't the first he's killed.

**OPS: Are there any other games that you've seen recently that you admired, either in terms of their character, location or the way they presented things?**

**JV:** There are a lot of games out there that are doing great stuff, but can you name me another open-world first-person shooter that's successful? We're it, man. And the performance is intense. We're in a moment in the industry where there's this uncanny valley of performance, and we want to elevate it. We're doing what I call actor-centric character design, rather than saying, "Here's the character, here's the script, here's the role we want someone to play, here's the storyboard, now go find an actor." That's traditionally what we do in the game's industry. Now we're saying 'Here's the character we want, let's go cast it. Find an actor who inspires us, even if it's not that character.' The [main antagonist, Vaas] you saw was not the character we designed. That guy was a creation of an actor who was trying out for a different role, and we were so inspired by his performance we said, "Screw it, let's change the character!" He was supposed to be a big tough guy, and when we saw this guy we said, "Ah, this is way more scary and intimidating. This is what we want." So we were following and trusting our actors, which is something the games industry doesn't know how to do. ▶

"WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO WITH *FAR CRY 3* IS MAKE SURE THAT EVERY SQUARE KILOMETRE HAS SOMETHING NEW AND INTERESTING AROUND IT"



Catch of the day? Bullets. In the face, sadly

"WE HAVE THIS TRADITION IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY OF INTERRUPTING GAMEPLAY EVERY 30 MINUTES WITH A MOVIE AND THAT'S JUST BULLSHIT"

**OPS:** So, performances are the key to what you're doing, but does any tech excite you as well? We're thinking about what Team Bondi has done with *L.A. Noire*...

**JV:** I think the tech is great, [though] I would say *L.A. Noire*'s performances are more like 2D, because of the distance that you experience them from. We're much more movie like, we're right in the face of who we're interacting with. We can't separate the face and body capture, we do them at the same time. We need that whole thing to be cohesive; we're looking right at the dude. It's a lot of work, but we're getting there and we have great technology. It's an exciting time to be directing actors and games. We have this tradition in the games industry of interrupting gameplay every 30 minutes with a movie and that's just bullshit. It just doesn't work. We finally have enough experience in storytelling as an industry that we're getting better, and we're not just trying to follow movies. We're doing it in a way that can only be done in games, and that's what *Far Cry* is all about.

**OPS:** Some gamers and games in general try to compare the medium to movies, and that doesn't feel right...

**JV:** It's a waste of time, they're totally different. You can't construct it the same way, you can't think up the narrative the same way. Writers who try to use writing tools that apply to [movie] scripts just end up flat out failing when you try to inject it into the game. It's irrelevant.

**OPS:** Perhaps it happens because parts of the industry and some gamers are still looking for legitimacy, even though it's so popular and generating a lot of revenue.

**JV:** We just need to f---king get over it and admit that we are legitimate.

**OPS:** Going back into game trends, a lot of games on the E3 show floor are either ditching a HUD or building it into the character or environment. Are you guys doing anything similar because we didn't see anything in the demo?

**JV:** I think of HUDs as only as necessary, but I'm not afraid to give the player clear information if that's what they need. In fact, to talk about the past, where the industry tried to remove the HUD too much. Sometimes it works really well, but it's specific to the context of the story you're telling, that's the difference. You can't do it for every game. You rip the HUD out of *Street Fighter*, well, you're going to be in trouble. I'm all for taking it out as much as possible, but I'm also all for seeing what is totally necessary to play the game.

**OPS:** So what's your favourite part of the game?

**JV:** (Laughs) The knife kills. You can do a double knife kill, where Brody sneaks up behind a guard, and if that guard has a knife

"Oh, these guys? They're just hanging around"

In his belt you can grab and hold him, kill him with it. Then if there's another guy down the range you hit the button again and throw it, taking out the other guy too. I feel like such a badass when I do that. And then there's the 'death from above' when he jumps down and skewers them. I love it. I'm a melee kind of guy.

**OPS:** Did you speak to someone in the military about these types of manoeuvres?

**JV:** Oh yeah. One of the great things about being at Ubisoft is that we have access to reams and reams of consultants and then we can just go to them when we need. It's a benefit of working at a big studio. Then again, *Far Cry* is about raw, improvised shooting, improvised fighting, our guy has to have enough training to know how to handle an AK.

**OPS:** This year's been pretty crowded for shooters, even more than usual. How do you think *Far Cry 3* will remain relevant in this increasingly flooded genre when it comes out?

**JV:** Well, have you seen another open-world shooter?

**OPS:** Good point. ↵

*Far Cry 3* is due to be released next year

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**"I WAS HIT  
TWICE BY CARS!"**  
GREG REDDAN TAKES A TRIP  
DOWN MEMORY LANE

# ON SALE NOW!





# FULL ON SEX

IN THE HD ERA IT HAS BECOME ALL TOO EASY TO BE  
DISTRACTED BY GORGEOUS GRAPHICS MAKING SWEET,  
SWEET LOVE TO YOUR EYEBALLS, ALL WHILE FORGETTING  
THE SYMPHONY OF SOUND SEDUCING YOUR EARS...

Words: Toby McCasker

Over the past few years, gaming has exploded into mainstream prominence. It's harder nowadays to find someone who hasn't run through the jungle as Nathan Drake, the hobby so ubiquitous the classification of 'gamer' does very little to set you apart from him or her anymore.

With the popular past-time's ever-growing penchant for mass home invasion comes the need for all of its supporting infrastructure to set astonishing precedents. Budgets are bigger, resources have become vast, and while it's easy to mistake *Gran Turismo 5* for an actual race in progress, the one area of contemporary gaming that has seen the most evolution over the past decade is its sound. Themely 8-bit bleeps and bleeps punched out on a Casio keyboard just aren't going to cut it when you can now see every battle-hewn line on Kratos' face.

"Music is a part of the whole experience," muses Inon Zur, the hugely prolific Israeli composer who artfully took over the *Fallout* series' morose post-apocalyptic from Mark Morgan and conceived the *Dragon Age* franchise's medieval moodiness. "Like the visuals, dialogue, story and gameplay, the music is an integral part of the whole experience and it is created to serve a purpose – it gives the game its human emotion. A good video game score is one that is immersed in the game, seamlessly supporting the drama and the emotions without standing out or being noticeable too much, but you feel it."

Michael McCann – whose score for the upcoming *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* is already causing waves – agrees, riffing on his time spent adding audio to Eidos Montreal's drooled-over cyberpunk threequel.

"For *Deus Ex*, you have a very open world. You can walk around for hours and hours in the same locations, and often return to locations throughout the game. Because of this, audio

**"THEMELY 8-BIT BLEEPS AND BLOOPS  
JUST AREN'T GOING TO CUT IT WHEN  
YOU CAN NOW SEE EVERY BATTLE-HEWN  
LINE ON KRATOS' FACE"**

director Steve Szcepkowski and I decided to look at the music more as a reflection of environment and leave the story-driven music and main character themes to cinematics and specific story points in the game. What I liked about this approach," he adds, "is that it allowed a lot of experimentation in the ambient music; using sounds within the environment as part of the music and creating these very rich, and sometimes emotional music beds that surround you while you play. It's a much less melodic score than much of my previous work but I think it is much more immersive than anything I've ever done before."

While it might sound like these two are starting to deal in the esoteric, Zur and McCann couldn't be more spot-on. The key is a fluid kind of emotion, a quality unique to

game sound design that guarantees a direct connection with the player they're usually not even aware of. It's something that has taken the industry at large a long time to fully realise, perhaps because the concept is so intangible: the greatest of games are inextricably linked to their soundtracks in such a way that, without them, the experience might well fall to ring with the same kind of immortality that only that rare,

perfect synthesis of everything great and small can achieve. It becomes impossible to separate them, with many scores as synonymous with the success of their software as the gameplay within. When someone bemoans the lack of a *Final Fantasy VII* remake, it is Nobuo Uematsu's

whimsical 'Prelude' that cracks the code to your nostalgia-vault.

And then there's Norihiko Hibino's 'Snake Eater'. Let's take a moment, shall we?

*What a thrill  
With darkness and silence through the night  
What a thrill  
I'm searching and I'll melt into you  
What a fear in my heart  
But you're so supreme!*

*I'd give my life  
Not for honour, but for you! (Snake Eater)  
In my time, there'll be no-one else  
Crime, it's the way I fly to you! (Snake Eater)  
I'm still in a dream,  
Snake Eater!*

# MAJOR PLAYERS

We've spoken to four maestros here but there are a horde of other talented mofos beavering away behind the tunes to your favourite games



## MICHAEL GIACCHINO

The undisputed king, Giacchino is as well known for his work scoring *Medal of Honor* and *Call of Duty* as he is for laying down high-end audio for *The Incredibles* (and a variety of other Pixar flicks, including *Up* and *Cars 2*) *Star Trek*, and the recent *Super 8*.

## GREG EDMONSON

Sci-fi buffs will remember Edmonson's work from Joss Whedon's always-lamented *Firefly* series; everyone else should know that this is the man whose music brings the *Uncharted* games to adventurous life.

## JACK WALL

Starting with *Myst*, Wall's effortless brand of grandiose soundscaping can now be heard uplifting the action of *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* and adorning the *Mass Effect* franchise with a Vangelis-inspired sheen.

## HARRY GREGSON-WILLIAMS

What would Solid Snake's endless war be like without Gregson-Williams' spectacular brand of future-militant jungle boogie? That title track from *Guns of the Patriots* is some of his finest, most emotive work yet.

## AKIRA YAMAOKA

The man, the myth, the legend. *Silent Hill* just isn't *Silent Hill* without Yamaoka's eerie knack for an even eerier dollop of rusty, creeping atmosphere. Where unsettling ambience is concerned, the gods look to him.



"AS MANY NEW METHODS OF EXPRESSION AS THE  
NEW AGE OF RECORDING AFFORDS IT, A GAME'S  
THUNDEROUS BACKING SCORE WOULD BE NOTHING  
WITHOUT THE RESOURCES TO SET IT IN MOTION"

Someday, you go through the rain  
And someday, you feed, on a tree frog  
This ordeal, the trial, to survive  
For the day we see new light!

I'd give my life  
Not for honour, but for you! (Snake Eater)  
In my time, there'll be no-one else  
Crime, it's the way I fly to you! (Snake Eater)  
I'm still in a dream,  
Snake Eater!

I'm still in a dream,  
Snake Eater!

The English, the hilarious allusions to probable frog-eating, the fact that vocalist Cynthia Harrell somehow managed to sing the whole thing not just without cracking up, but with massive gumption – it's got it all, and it even netted her the 'Best Original Vocal Song – Pop' award from the Game Audio Network Guild at GDC 2005. While it does make scaling all 1,000 vertical miles of that ladder somehow more thrilling than tiresome, the very fact that a piece of music written expressly for a video game can now garner professional accolades provides a retrospective on just how far the art has come and how highly it is now regarded.

It's an evolution fellow award-scooper and

*Hitman* composer Jesper Kyd is keenly aware of. A large part of this, he feels, has been made possible by the digital evolution in studio recording. Take it from a man who started his career using only a Commodore 64 and its SID analogue chip.

"The most obvious change is that the music has become CD-based so there is no limit to the number of channels you can have in a song which means the music sounds better now; we can have symphony orchestras and other live musicians which is wonderful. Also, a lot more thought goes into a soundtrack these days. A lot less music was needed back then whereas today we're creating three-hour scores and working with larger productions so there are a lot more considerations."

As many new methods of expression as the new age of recording affords it, a game's thunderous backing score would be nothing without the resources to set it in motion despite the fact it is often the brainchild of one mind. Like Kyd says, game audio can now accommodate entire international ensembles (the fee for which is usually negotiated as part of the composer's salary) – and it often does, adds Zur.

"As the success of the industry continues, the budgets for games have grown and therefore the music should benefit also, which

gives us more opportunities to work with top musicians and record at the best studios in the world. For example, on my current project *The Lord of the Rings: War in The North*, we recorded with the London Philharmonia Orchestra and Choir at Abbey Road Studios."

When this primarily electronic medium finally met the big-budget organic tools of its Hollywood counterpart, evolution within the soundscapes themselves took place. You know it's serious when something inadvertently gives rise to its own creative signature, its own methodology. Kyd points to the unusual results gleaned from hybridising the human and synthetic, noting his work on the *Hitman* franchise and *Freedom Fighters*.

"For the *Hitman: Blood Money* soundtrack I mixed the electronic vibe of *Hitman: Contracts* with the full symphony of *Hitman 2* and came up with a new sound. Whereas *Freedom Fighters* was a mix of electronic music and choir, *Blood Money* was a mix of orchestra with electronics, so I learned a lot from writing these scores. It was a very enjoyable experience because I was given so much freedom to experiment in order to come up with a unique sound. I also feel that the *Blood Money* music is an evolution of the *Freedom Fighters* music because some tracks in *Blood Money* are mostly choir mixed with electronics. ▶



"MUSIC IN GAMES - RURAL SEX, IF YOU WILL - STILL HAS A LITTLE WAY LEFT TO GO BEFORE IT IS TRULY ON PAR WITH THE SHEER SONIC MUSCLE BULKING UP THE BIG SCREEN'S EXPLOITS"



**JASON GRAVES**

Best known for his innovative, BAFTA award-winning, soundtrack for EA's *Dead Space*.



**INON ZUR**

Zur was studying composition by the age of 10; he's behind *Dragon Age*, *Fallout* and more.



**JESPER KYD**

Mostly self-taught, Kyd is responsible for the scores behind *Hitman*, *Borderlands*, *Assassin's Creed* and more.



**MICHAEL MCCANN**

Known for the soundtrack to *Splinter Cell: Double Agent*, now working on *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*.

McCann's recent *Deus Ex* adventures paint a similar picture, hardwiring Kyd's experiments with that liquid emotion we talked about earlier and taking them to their logical conclusion.

"The story incorporates religion, politics, economics and ethics into this conflict, which makes it a very complex and important theme, and one that needs to be expressed musically," says McCann. "To do this, I wanted a constant conflict between acoustic instruments (representing the past - and predominantly done with vocals) and electronic instruments (representing the future). The soundtrack does start off more electronic, but balances out as the different sides of the conflict are introduced. For example, the earlier locations like Detroit are quite electronic, but as you discover more of the story and meet factions that are fighting against scientific innovation, the score takes on more organic elements to represent that side."

The job is, as we've discovered, particularly specialised and generally requires 15 months or more from an individual composer in addition to hundreds of dynamic recorded works. Thus, the men and women behind the digital bombast are now paid accordingly.

However, the pay structure does retain some quirks that hint at its modest origins, McCann admits.

"The salary for a composer is traditionally based on minutes - you make a certain amount per minute and then it becomes a matter of how many minutes of music and how involved the production is. Although the 'per-minute' cost on a AAA game is quite good, there are no royalties or back-end like film and TV. On a widely broadcast TV series, the royalties can very easily add up to more than the original salary. I know there is pressure in the industry to bring this kind of royalty system to the internet and game world, but I think that is a ways off."

A ways off or no, artists specifically renowned for their work in film and television have increasingly found themselves scoring for gamingdom, with famed *Twin Peaks* composer Angelo Badalamenti's chilling strings for David Cage's *Heavy Rain* PS2 precursor, *Fahrenheit*, serving as an early example. A few years ago, this kind of cross-over would've been unheard of. It's a reality that has become increasingly natural as the medium gets cosier and cosier with the legitimacy of Hollywood audio production every year, feels *Dead Space* composer Jason Graves. He would know. Prior to scoring Isaac's terrifying odysseys aboard the Ishimura and beyond, Graves worked exclusively in film and television himself.

"I feel like games have actually become a lot



more cinematic in the last few years, especially where music is concerned. Developers have always been trying to provide the most immersive experience possible, but it seems like we're finally to a point where games are almost being held in the same regard as film.

"From a technical standpoint," he continues, "scoring a film is fairly straightforward. You have a scene that always plays out the same way no matter how many times you watch it, so the music will always sound the exact same. In a game, there could be many different choices and outcomes for any given scene, so I have to be sure to give the developer a lot of emotional choices in my music."

McCann has seen it happening, too. "It's not just a matter of live orchestral scores and major composers like Clint Mansell and Hans Zimmer entering the field that signal progression. I think this was inevitable as games have become more cinematic. I think what's more interesting though is how diverse and experimental game scores are becoming. Looking at Amon Tobin's work on *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*, and the scores for *Bully*, *Red Dead Redemption*, and even the hybrid of score and source music in both *BioShock* and *Fallout 3*; there's better work being done here – more innovative production, more thought-out implementation of music than most movies made today."

They're sentiments trebly echoed by Zur. "it's a great area to work in and also evolving with a lot of positive changes; it's becoming a more recognised field. Games are getting closer and closer to movies and the music has a lot to contribute to the emotional impact of the story. But since it is an interactive medium this aspect also needs to be respected; it is an art form in its own right."

Kyd agrees as well, but it's interesting to note that, despite the fantastic distances the medium has travelled from then 'til now, music in games – aural sex, if you will – still has a little way left to go before it is truly on par with the sheer sonic muscle bulking up the big screen's exploits.

"It has not surpassed the production values of Hollywood. It's getting closer, but considering the creative fees and live budgets that are involved with major feature films it's always a challenge to compete with a AAA Hollywood score because the budgets are so much bigger and they are able to hire the absolute best in any genre which really opens up the possibilities.

"That's not to say that you can't achieve a similar quality with a video game score," he grins, "but you have to be highly creative and find ways to be able to compete with the level of a Hollywood budget production."

## RECOGNITION ON RECORD

Game music now earns recognised props from legit organisations the world over. Check out how many ways a budding OST can cement its excellence

### IVOR NOVELLO AWARDS

As of 2010, these guys have included a category for Best Original Video Game Score. In its debut year, Joris de Man's *Killzone 2* went home with it. In 2011, *Napoleon: Total War* got the gong.

### SPIKE VGAS

Ol' Spike doles out awards for Best Soundtrack, Best Song in a Game, and Best Original Score. *Red Dead Redemption* sauntered off with the latter last year, and deservedly so.

### GRAMMYS

In 2012, the Grammys will include video game music for the first time as part of the Visual Media (Motion, Television, Video Game Music, or Other Visual Media) awards. That didn't stop *Civilization IV*'s Baba Yetu from being the first piece from a game to win the 53rd annual music awards' Best Instrumental Arrangement Accompanying Vocalists, though.

### INTERNATIONAL FILM MUSIC CRITICS ASSOCIATION

Their Best Original Score for Interactive Media award has yet to see any game scores win a major award since the awards began in 2004, although Michael Giacchino showed up as Composer of the Year in 2009.

### HOLLYWOOD MUSIC IN MEDIA AWARDS

Ramin Djawadi's work on *Medal of Honor* scooped Best Original Score – Video Game last year, whilst Inon Zur's stirring 'I Am the One' from *Dragon Age: Origins* did the same in 2009.

# RENEGADE OPS

## RETURN OF THE HIGH SCORE

The studio behind 2010's craziest action game, *Just Cause 2*, is back with a title that's going to cost you your friends – and it's on the PSN. Senior producer Andreas Thorsén and game designer Axel Lindberg from Avalanche Software tell us everything you need to know about *Renegade Ops*

**OPS:** You're the guys behind *Just Cause 2*, and that was out and out fun. What was the genesis from a crazy open-world action to a smaller title released on PSN?

**Andreas Thorsén:** Well, it's not that different because we still have huge maps, driving across at high speed, and blowing things up. We still have these huge explosions and fireworks that we did in *Just Cause 2*. We've fine-tuned the mechanics, and it's a bit more arcadey.

**Axel Lindberg:** A lot of the same core values we had for *Just Cause 2* are here for this game. We're still over-the-top, promoting crazy action, rolling through buildings...

**Andreas Thorsén:** Over the top, crazy Hollywood action is our bullseye.

**AL:** That was on one of our first design documents. What we've done is take those values and mix them up with how games were done back in the mid-'80s and '90s; games like *Jackal* on the Nintendo, or *Desert Strike* on Mega Drive.

**AT:** *Renegade Ops* came about as we were finishing *Just Cause 2* and a few guys wanted to do something with a smaller and more intimate team, and a shorter development cycle. It's a good fit to do a digital title.

**OPS:** We noticed a few different vehicles when we played, like an APC with two machine guns, and another guy had a buggy. Are you always in land-based vehicles?

**AT:** You can play the game as one of four characters, each with their own unique land vehicle that controls

differently from the next with its own special ability, like a weapon or shield. There's the APC-like vehicle with the shield, a buggy with an airstrike, another with an EMP, and another with a heavy cannon.

**AL:** The character with the heavy cannon can't move when he's shooting his weapon, as his legs drop down in a 'siege' mode, so you have to time when you're using it. All the abilities have their strengths and weaknesses, and there are different strategies you need to use against enemies. There's a whole bunch of different enemies too, and they have their own mechanics so the way that you kill a tank is different to the way you destroy a flamethrower truck who has a completely different strategy. It's definitely a skill-based core mechanic that we want players to be aware of.

**OPS:** How does the game progress? We've only had a brief go at multiplayer...

**AT:** There's a single-player campaign, local multiplayer with two-player splitscreen, and online multiplayer for four players. When you play through a level you can upgrade your weapon with blue pickups, and you also get secondary weapons. But we also have a persistent upgrade system where each character can be levelled up between stages. This can be tailored to your vehicle, special ability and so on.

**OPS:** So can players take the character they have in their single-player game online and vice versa?



**AL:** Yes, exactly like that. The thing is that as you're unlocking items you're unlocking the ability to equip certain upgrades. So once you've fully levelled up a character you'll have access to all their upgrades, but only have four slots to use. What happens is that you have presets that you can use on certain levels. We want to people to have fun with customising the way they set up the character, and some of the upgrades will affect the capabilities or strength of another that you have equipped.

**AT:** You can play through in casual mode, which is fine if you're playing through with your child, for example, or you just want to see the game, and you get infinite lives. Then there's normal difficulty that adds upgrades, but you only have three lives. You're given continues, but you lose your score. Then there's hardcore with three lives, and that's it, but it gives you the best opportunities for the biggest score.

**AL:** So if you choose casual you'll get a score penalty, basically. You can never compete with a hardcore on the scoreboard. But, we want to be able to play this with our children too, whilst still offering a challenge for the guys who want it.

So, for the APC who had a shield you'll fold out it out and it can bounce enemy rockets and bullets off. The upgrade will bounce those projectiles back at the enemy who shot it. You're going to have to be very strategic to be successful in hardcore mode!

**OPS: You mentioned scores are a big part of the game, and you're going on a scoreboard to compare yourself with others. EA has tapped into that of late; are you implementing a system where you can compare yourself against your mates?**

**AT:** We have something similar. In the single-player game you're comparing your

score live against your friends, so when you're close to beating your friend's score you get a message telling you that, and also when you do beat it.

**OPS: The return of the high score seems pretty important. It's what games were built on in the late '80s...**

**AL:** It's something we [as an industry] have strayed away from. Not a lot of highscores in the big triple-A titles, they have become more of a blockbuster movie. I was really happy when the PSN came along 'cause I really miss the old-school games, and no-one was doing things like that. It's awesome to be able to work on a project like this.

**OPS: Are the game modes competitive only, or is there a co-op mode too?**

**AT:** We like to call it competitive co-op. You constantly share the same goal to complete objectives and clear the level, but you're always fighting for pickups and score.

**AL:** You never shoot each other. But if you're the first guy to get to a tank and destroy it, for example, then you'll get all the points. So, in a four-player game you really want to be first at the objective which means you need to drive well, use all your rockets or whatever you've been saving up to take it out before anyone else gets there.

**AT:** Yeah, and if you have full health and run over a health pick up you'll pick up a huge bonus from that. So, do you want to take it or leave it for your friend who needs help?

**AL:** We're trying to make a game where friends will really start to hate each other!

**OPS: On the upgrades, would you say the system is a bit like a 'perk' system?**

**AL:** Yeah. We've drawn inspiration from the *Call of Duty* series. The thing that I like, is that with a game like *Call of Duty*, and our game, is that the 'perks' are so easily accessible. When you have three or four slots, they synergise in different ways. It can look simple at first but it gets quite complex quite quickly. It's one of my favourite design philosophies to make something complex from something simple.

**OPS: Is there a story mode, and different locations to visit?**

**AT:** Definitely. We're not revealing how many levels, but we have different environments, day/night cycles and weather effects to increase variation. There is a story where an evil mad man, Inferno, is holding the world hostage, and then there's a hero, Bryant who takes matter into his own hands and gets a team of his old military friends and forms Renegade Ops. So when you play the game you're one of his team and he's constantly giving you orders, and we use comic book panels to explain the story.

**AL:** While story is definitely not the focus point, we did the whole 2D comic presentation because we thought that it really gives you a lot more purpose. It's just a lot more fun to blow up a tank when you can see the cartoon man screaming inside and you'll be more connected to the world. Each level is the next chapter in the story, with a few twists here and there.

**OPS: Have you got Rico from *Just Cause* in there at all?**

**AT:** No comment.

**OPS: What about a level on a strip-club zeppelin?**

**AL:** (Laughs) No comment. Well, Easter eggs are fun. That's a comment.



▲ **Axel Lindberg**  
Game designer,  
*Renegade Ops*



▲ **Andreas Thorsén**  
Senior producer,  
*Renegade Ops*



# THE OPS FATHER'S DAY GIFT GUIDE

We've tracked down the hottest gear, gadgets and games to make this Father's Day a success. Or you can pocket that cash you were going to splash on the old man and grab something for yourself!

## Ⓜ Big kid at heart



▲ **PARROT AR.DRONE**  
Price: \$349 • Contact: ebgames.com.au

You know those military devices with no pilot that fly in and 'eliminate targets'? This quadcopter is like a home version of those, but without the heavy-duty weaponry, and is way better than a mini helicopter. It's controlled by either an iPhone or iPad (and soon enough, an Android handset) so Dad can send it on a strafing run to rival anything he's seen in *Ghost Recon*. Ballistic amounts of fun.

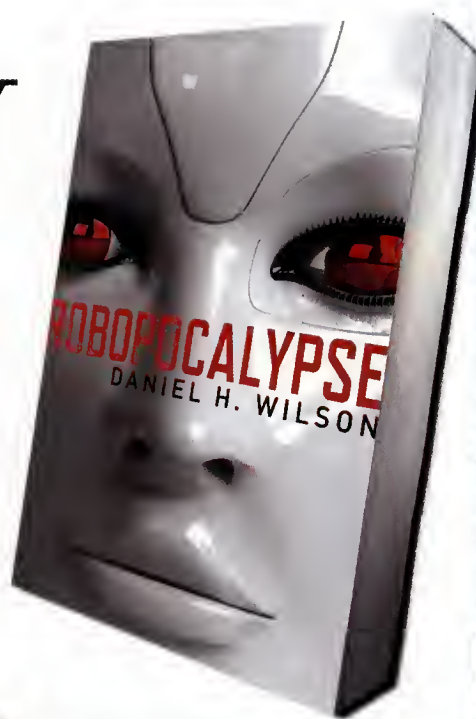


▲ **STAR WARS: THE COMPLETE SAGA**  
Price: \$139.95 • Distributor: 20th Century Fox

Look, it's *Star Wars* (all of them), one of the greatest and influential movie series, ever, with more extras than you'd ever think possible.

◀ **SONY XPERIA PLAY**  
Price: available on contract • Contact: sonyericsson.com

So when you're not on the PS3 your father's the first to pick up the controller? Keep him entertained and in touch with the world around him with the first Android handset to have a PlayStation pad built in. It's ace at not only playing PSone favourites using the familiar face buttons and capacitive thumbpads, but also Xperia PLAY optimised Android games.



▲ **ROBOCALYPSE**  
Price: \$29.95 • Contact: simonandschuster.com.au

Set two decades in the future the war against the robots has just finished – and we're the unlikely victors. Sereant Cormac Wallace has just pounded some robot troops into the Alaskan dirt when he discovers a robot black box that details the entire war, with accounts of humans who fought and died in the fight. It's thrilling stuff, and it might make your old man think twice about just how much he can trust his man-gadgets.

▼ **DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO**  
Price: \$109.95 • Distributor: Ubisoft

Set in the city with iconic hills, *Driver: San Francisco* captures the spirit of car chase movies from the '70s and it'll make Dad feel like Steve McQueen. As well as an engaging plot there's a spitscreen mode and truly inventive multiplayer that'll keep him coming back again and again. Get in now and you may still be able to grab the lush Collector's Edition, with a replica Dodge Challenger model.





# 🎯 The outdoorsman



◀ **SAMSUNG SH100 CAMERA**  
Price: \$279 • Contact: [samsung.com.au](http://samsung.com.au)

Ideally suited for a dad who loves to travel, this Wi-Fi enabled snapper is going to capture his adventurous exploits and then email or upload his pics quick smart. Cleverly, it can use an Android smartphone as a remote viewer, meaning the camera can be left in just the right spot and Dad can sit back and bide his time for the perfect shot. It'll capture pics at a massive 14.2 megapixels, so Dad'll be able to blow his holiday pics up to billboard size.

▼ **MOTOROLA DEFY**  
Price: available on contract • Contact: [motorola.com](http://motorola.com)

The bloke outdoors needs a phone that's going to handle some abuse, so this rugged Android handset should be more than capable. It's dustproof, water and scratch resistant, so if Dad's happy to get his hands wet or dirty the DEFY will keep up. Impressively, this good looking unit will handle being submerged in a metre of water, too.



▲ **220 TRIATHLON**  
Price: \$58 per year • Contact: [magshop.com.au/220-Triathlon](http://magshop.com.au/220-Triathlon)

If Dad's the kind of bloke who ditches bacon and eggs in bed in favour of swimming, cycling and running his way to a personal best on Father's Day morning, then a subscription to 220 Triathlon is a winner's choice. This bi-monthly mag is fit for novices, intermediate and expert triathletes alike, filled with race tips, nutritional advice, product reviews and interviews with the world's best competitors.

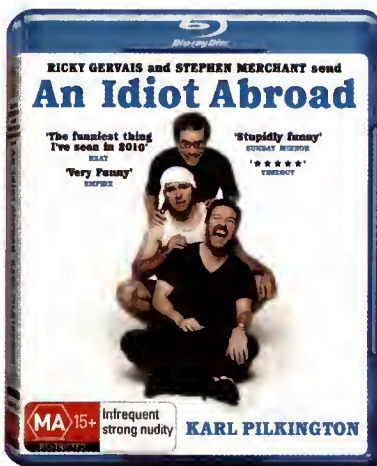


▲ **LEATHERMAN SUPER TOOL 300 MULTITOOL**  
Price: \$190 • Contact: [leatherman.com.au](http://leatherman.com.au)

The Super Tool 300 is a heavy duty 19 in 1 multi-function unit that won't just take on the great outdoors, it'll cut it down and put it back together again. Importantly, it comes with a file so if one of the pliers loses its grip or the scissors just don't cut it anymore your dad can sharpen them up on the spot. It's also backed by a 25-year guarantee. Perfect for all the Bear Grylls wannabes.

◀ **AN IDIOT ABROAD**  
Price: \$39.95 • Distributor: Roadshow

Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant send their mate Karl Pinkerton off into the world to broaden his mind and generally laugh at his failures. Hilariously uncomfortable viewing.



# ⊗ Mr. Entertainment

## SONY HX820 BRAVIA ▶

Price: \$2,999 (177cm) \$3,999 (140cm) • Contact: sony.com.au

Sure, the PS3's an entertainment workhorse, but these Bravias are a technological centrepiece. They're hungry for media, and they'll make everything your dad wants to watch – whether it's a 3D Blu-ray, YouTube video or free-to-air – look beyond amazing. Plus, the new Video on Demand service powered by Qriocity will work flawlessly, letting you take the PlayStation for some gaming R&R and let him rent movies over the Internet.



## ▲ POWERMAT

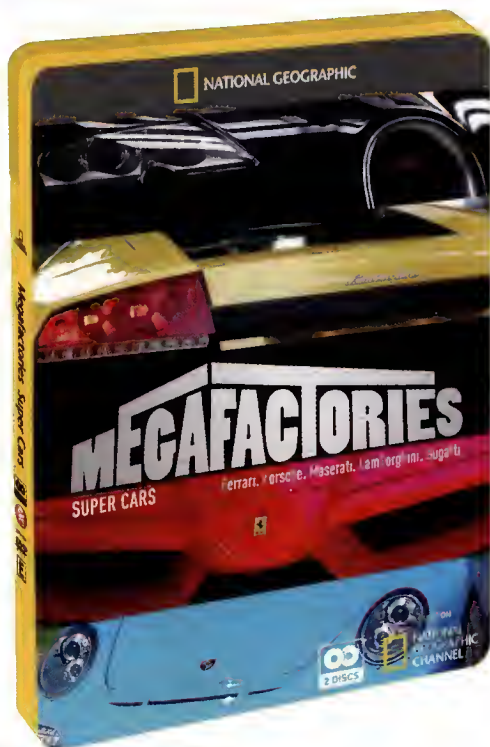
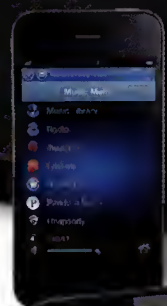
Price: \$149.95 (mat and battery bundle)  
Contact: australia.powermat.com

Tangled power cables are at best unsightly and at worst a nightmare. Cut the power adaptor out of the equation with this all-in-one charging station that will happily juice up iPods, Blackberrys, PSPs and dozens of other devices. Dad can either slip a custom-made battery on his gadget, or attach it to a sleek multi-tipped battery block. Dead useful, and very slick.

## SONOS ZONEPLAYER S5 ▶

Price: \$599 • Contact: sonos.com.au

Whether your dad's back catalogue is filled with Adam and the Ants or ZZ Top, give him the gift of music with this stylish wireless music system. It streams songs from a computer or an Internet radio station, and dad can either use a Sonos controller or download an app using his iPod touch, iPad, iPhone or Android handset.



## SAMSUNG GALAXY S II ▶

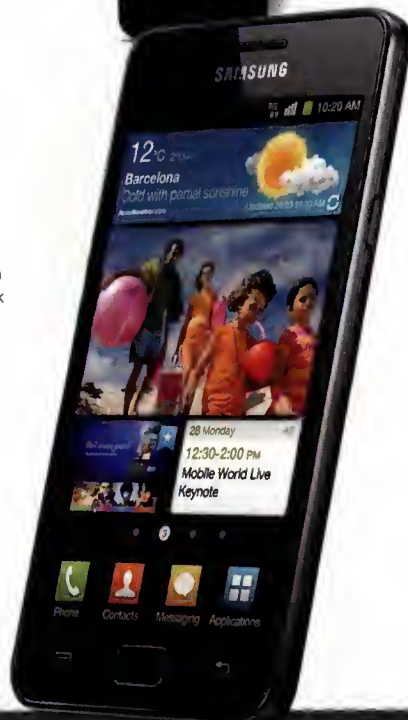
Price: price on contract  
Contact: Optus, Vodafone, Telstra

The sports car of phones, Samsung's Android unit is like a touchy feely work of art. Thinner and faster than the model it succeeds, this powerful multimedia machine can connect to a TV via HDMI and playback HD content, whether Dad's shot it himself on the 8-megapixel camera or downloaded it from the 'net. Gorgeous to look at and use.

## ◀ NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC: MEGAFABRIQUES – SUPER CARS

Price: \$39.95  
Distributor: Madman

He might not own one of these luxury machines but he'll love seeing how Ferrari, Lamborghini, Bugatti and Porsche put their cars together before they roll out onto the road.



# ⓐ Forget Dad, what about me?



### ▲ VAIO Z SERIES LAPTOP

Price: \$3999  
Contact: sony.com.au

This Sony laptop is a paradox. The 33.3cm full HD screen is attached to a 1.2kg body, which makes it a lightweight, but plug it into the external optical drive with its built in graphics card, and it can attach an additional monitors to become a four-screen behemoth. A beautiful, Core i7, 8GB behemoth that also offers up to 13 hours of battery life.



### ▲ ROXIO GAME CAPTURE

Price: \$169.95  
Contact: jbhifi.com.au

So you want to prove your gaming muscle, or just want to watch a winning sequence over and over? Plug this compact box between your PS3 or PSP and your TV with component cables, and then record your footage onto your PC. Dead easy to set up with the included software, you can add your own voice to the game footage to really make it your own.



### ▲ DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

Price: \$99.95  
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

This is one of our most wanted games of 2011, and we reckon you're going to love it. Set in 2027 where mechanical body augmentations are becoming the norm, you're trying to figure out who's responsible for an attack on your employer. Part shooter, part RPG, you can choose whether you go into a situation all guns blazing, or if you're going to take the sneaky way round. Champagne gaming.



### ▲ FAST & FURIOUS 5

Price: \$44.95  
Distributor: Universal


Vin Diesel and Paul Walker return in the best *Fast & Furious* movie ever, where the unlikely duo are trying to out pace a drug lord who wants them dead and a Federal Agent who wants them behind bars. High-octane stuff.



### ◀ SAMSUNG SMART TV LED D6000

Price: \$2099 (40 inch)  
Contact: samsung.com/au

Gamers: we know all you want to see is crisp, eyeball-blistering HD, and that you crave the cutting edge of tech. But you don't want to murder your wallet while doing so. Enter the 3D compatible Smart TV. This unit hits that magic sweetspot between features and cost, delivering great looks and social media connectivity (Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) that nicely complements your PS3.

A person wearing a dark, tactical-style jacket and a wide-brimmed hat is looking down at a laptop. The person is wearing black gloves and has a serious expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# KNOW HOW TO USE A COMPUTER?

Connect with other PS3 gamers  
and the team at Official PlayStation  
Magazine - Australia at:  
[www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia](http://www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia)

competitions & prizes • discussions • news & updates • feedback

# in review



GAME OF THE MONTH

## F.E.A.R. 3

The height of fright or non-scary tripe?

## Review ratings

- 10 Incredible:** Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.
- 9 Excellent:** An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.
- 8 Great:** Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.
- 7 Good:** A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.
- 6 Decent:** This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.
- 5 Mediocre:** A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on game that half sucks.
- 4 Poor:** Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.
- 3 Very disappointing:** Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.
- 2 Terrible:** Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.
- 1 The worst:** Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. *OPS* has handed out this score only once.

## This Month

- 70** F.E.A.R. 3
- 74** Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon
- 76** Captain America: Super Soldier
- 80** Transformers: Dark of the Moon
- 82** Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters
- 83** Ape Escape
- 83** Cars 2
- 83** UFC Personal Trainer
- 83** Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition



▲ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.



**Play this  
if you like**

Not being scared, *F.E.A.R. 2*

**Info**

**FORMAT:** PS3

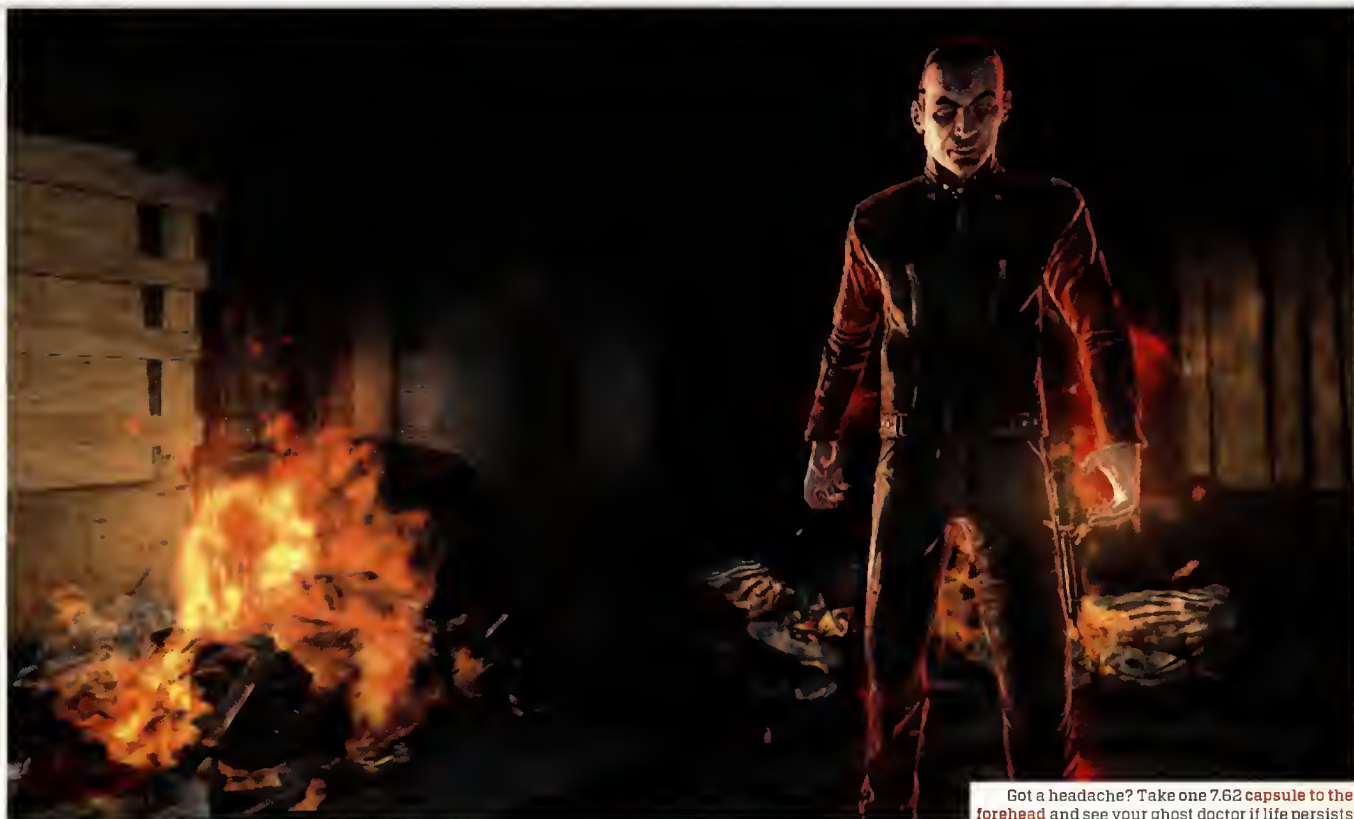
**GENRE:** SHOOTER

**RELEASE:** NOW

**DISTRIBUTOR:** WARNER BROS.

**DEVELOPER:** DAY 1 STUDIOS

**PLAYERS:** 1-4



Got a headache? Take one 7.62 capsule to the forehead and see your ghost doctor if life persists

# F.E.A.R. 3

“I see quasi-non-undead people”

Apparently life after “death by bullet to the head” is just as bloody confusing for the shoot-er as it is for the shoot-ee.

Point Man, speechless hero of the original *F.E.A.R.* game, installed a blowhole in his evil brother’s head only to have Fettel come right back as a co-op partner in *F.E.A.R. 3*. Why the change of heart and the “Lazareunion”? Well, according to the writers it’s because *stickin’ together is what good brothers do after fratricide*.

Even if you do manage to leap aboard that logic train, *F.E.A.R. 3* will just kick you right off again with its constantly shifting ideas on what a “ghost bro” can and can’t do. Allow us to educate you on the rules of the afterlife: despite surviving his head being turned into a

canoe, a ghost can still be “killed” by bullets in combat (but also “revived”, sometimes). Also, though a ghost is invisible to everyone but his brother in any cutscene, every douchenozzle and his dog can see him in combat (even if he possesses their best friend and offers to shout them an ice cold beer).

Furthermore, ghosts are material enough to use keyboards, open doors and rescue Point Man from a chasm drop by physically grabbing his hand. That said, ghosts are too immaterial to pick up guns or operate mechs (but are ethereal enough to possess people through jail cell bars).

We seriously doubt whether actual purgatory is going to be as goalpost-shiftingly tormenting as a stint in *F.E.A.R. 3*.

Fortunately, you’ll only discover how simultaneously awesome and useless Fettel is until after you finish the single-player and he unlocks as a character. Everything up until that point is solid, if stock-standard, first-person shooting. Once again you’ll hopscotch between cover – but now with a serviceable first-person cover system – and perforate special forces types with the slow-mo powers of Point Man. Your “usual suspects” fodder are also bolstered by a number of mid-bosses who must be killed (with regular death, not *ghost non-undeath*) to stop them teleporting in more grunts.

Much like ghost bro Fettel, your average enemy has just as much ability to impress you as he does to seem incompetent. On the one hand the AI work together quite slickly and will regularly out manoeuvre you if you don’t keep tabs on them. Unfortunately, these guys also put the “special” in spec ops as they forgo silent hand signals and common sense in favour of constant battle chatter. ▶

## HUDDling without fear

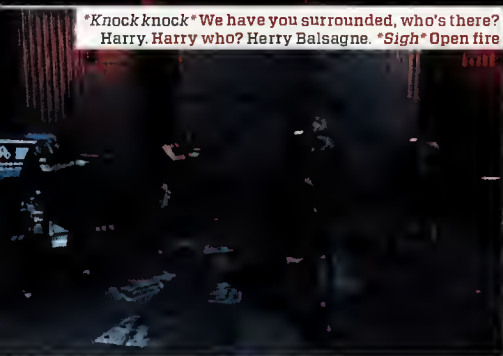
*F.E.A.R. 3* likes to frequently cut through the tension (and remind you that you’re playing a game) with constant pop-ups from its score-based challenge and XP system. These challenges are available on every chapter, and also reset after each chapter, so it’s good to get a game plan going of what you want to achieve with the time you have. As you level up you’ll permanently earn things like increased slow-mo, power slides, extra grenades or ghost mana.



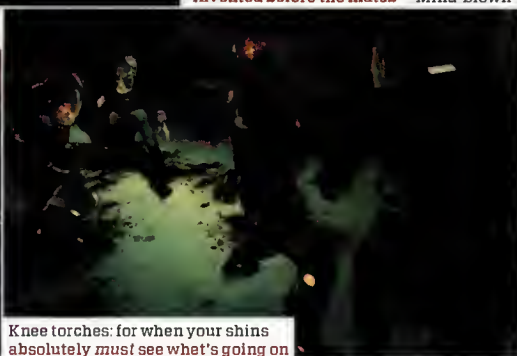
“Oh, the cat’s in the cradle and the mutant loons, little boy blue eats his hearts with a spoon...”



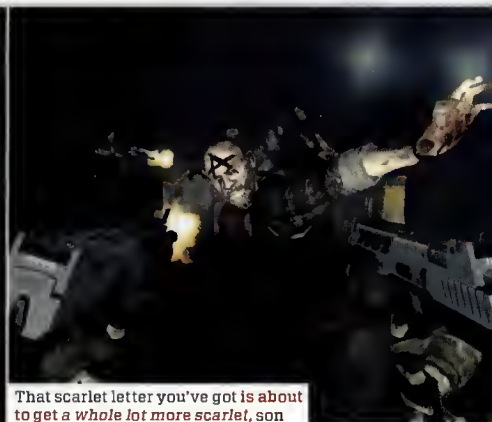
"Hey, soldier. The cigarette lighter was invented before the match" *"Mind-blown"*



*"Knock knock"* "We have you surrounded, who's there? Harry. Harry who? Herry Balsagne. *"Sigh"* Open fire



Knee torches: for when your shins absolutely *must* see what's going on



That scarlet letter you've got is about to get a whole lot more scarlet, son

Henchmen say the darndest things too. Depopulate his team and a solitary grunt will shout out the equivalent of "I'm all alone here, come finish me off and steal my bullets". Prune off one of his limbs instead and the same guy will fairly calmly report that he's "lost an arm here." Failing that, a gaggle of grunts will just strategise to each other with megaphones by telegraphing such gems as "I'm leaving cover *right now* to see what that camper is doing, I sure hope he *doesn't pop*

*out and shoot me*". At which point you will. Time and time again.

If you think a god-like control of time and gossipy enemies make for an easy battle, you should see the same fight with Fettel. Ghost bro has the ability to incapacitate one enemy by levitating them off the ground as he spams unlimited sychic blasts at any other sucker in the room. If that gets boring he can zap into the body of any enemy he wishes and use them like Point Man (minus the slow-mo skill). Link this über-family together in a two-person co-op match and you're a force to be reckoned with. Honestly, any difficulty below 'Insane' is just an exercise in grunt genocide, and that's not factoring in the many sections where you both stomp around in mechs.

While that amount of power may sound like a good thing, it actual runs counter to what most people will expect from the franchise. *F.E.A.R.* as the title may have tipped you off, was about scaring the crap out of you first,

and shooting things second. But it's quite difficult to be scared when the primary 'antagonist' is your own mother and you can slow down time while your ghost bro possesses more fools than the studio audience of *The X-Factor*. Day 1 Studios has made a big deal about its "procedural scare" system that effectively causes creepy things to jack-in-the-box out of different spots. But after multiple playthroughs in the right gaming environment (dark room, sound system up, gamma right down, underpants brown) our pulses were barely elevated once.

In comparative terms *F.E.A.R. 3* has gone the decidedly unscary, action intensive route of *Resident Evil 5*. In both cases the action is quite decent but while *Resident Evil 5* got away with it by being in a less popular genre, subtracting the scare-factor in *F.E.A.R. 3* effectively robs the franchise of one of the very few things that set it apart in a sea of same-old first-person shooters.

It's clear that the divergent co-op of Point Man and Fettel is the big focus now, but it ends up feeling like a shoehorned feature that doesn't necessarily add value. It's also an extremely unbalanced partnership that quickly devolves into being adversarial. You'll only ever help your team mate out "just enough" to get through, as the final mission will determine a winner based on your individual point performances (not an interactive duke out, as we would have preferred). Neither ending, we might add, is worth marginalizing a mate over anyway.

Separate from the story and the shaftings, *F.E.A.R. 3* has a selection of halfway decent multiplayer modes that mimic the sort of wave-based survival modes made popular by Treyarch's "Nazi Zombies". "Contractions" mode feels like a carbon copy in fact, as your knocked up demon mother's contractions unleash progressively tougher waves of enemies on you and three mates. It's technically solid, but much like the procedural scare system in the singleplayer, it's repetitive and lacking in surprises.

Next up is "Soul Survivor" mode in which a



Pilot this bad boy to mech friends and influence people to death







"O-M-G, threaten me all you want, I'm taking these manicure secrets to my grave

team of players are harassed by one sole player who possesses the bodies of AI-controlled Armacham soldiers in order to kill everybody. Sounds like fun – and it is for a while – but it soon becomes apparent that the regular human players are hopelessly outnumbered by bullet sponge enemies. The much better option is "Soul King", a competitive variant that makes everybody a body-snatching ghost.

Last but not least you have the hilariously titled "F--king Run" mode, where everybody has to score points by scything through enemies whilst trying to outrun a wall-like fog of death. It's actually the most hectic this game ever gets and it demands skill, teamwork, patience, and quick judgement. Our only criticism; having a single shared life between strangers is a breeding ground for abuse and idiocy. Even still, with the right players, this is tops.

Despite a few rays of fun, *F.E.A.R. 3* is a production that offers gloom, minus any impending sense of doom. As an action-based first-person shooter it's solid enough to stand alongside its contemporaries in the faceless, grey-brown ranks of the FPS genre, but it does nothing to stand out from the status quo. Judged in the context of the wider *F.E.A.R.* franchise, this co-op infused test sacrifices too much of what made this series unique. It feels as failed an experiment as the psycho bros. and their freaky demon mother. **Adam Mathew**



"Suddenly, I'm not half the man I used to be" \*Shotgun blast\*

## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** Drab and dark environs that lack menace. Rookie clipping-through-wall incidences.

**SOUND** Fettel is a well-voiced psychotic. Alma's birth squeals get annoying, as do the limpwristed "freaky violin" surprise effects.

**CONTROLS** Point Man controls great, Fettel has many, many frustrating limitations that don't make sense and get you killed.

**REPLAY VALUE** Most people will roll through once to get Fettel. Once again with a mate in co-op. Then play a few rounds of "F--king Run".

## Verdict

The only shock you'll receive is to how unscary and run-of-the-mill this is. Curb your enthusiasm.

6



# THEY TOOK EVERYTHING FROM US



Play this if you like

Red Faction Armageddon

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

FANTASY FACTS NEWS

DEVELOPER: VAIBUS CYCLE

SOFTWARE

PLAYERS: 1-6

RRP: \$49.95

# Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon

A joke where you're the punchline

**E**arth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon is memorable for all the wrong reasons. It's frustrating. It's mindless pulp. It's as ugly as a bucket of elbows. And it's not much fun at all.

It's immediate predecessor, *Earth Defense Force 2017*, never made it to PlayStation – don't worry if you never played it, you're not missing out on much. At the core *Insect Armageddon* is a very simple third-person shooter where you and a few

AI teammates are sent into a battlefield to blow up a swarm of giant bugs. That's about as far as the story and the premise goes, though you'll meet a decent variety of ants, spiders and robots on your trigger-mashing slog from the start to the end.

The formula barely changes. Pick a soldier from one of four classes, choose your loadout from the handful on offer – automatic weapons, rocket launchers, shotguns, etc. – and then start

off in a city landscape where a comically bad team leader directs you to a waypoint. Your time in the field racks up experience points, which in turn unlocks various weapons and upgrades. It's a familiar formula but the rewards barely inspire much will to keep going.

Sub-missions during each chapter are derivatives of either blowing up an anthill, defending a spot with mounted weapons, or destroying a boss that gives little indication you're shooting it in the glowing weak spot. These bosses take an absurd amount of punishment before crumbling, which is in pretty stark contrast to the buggy grunts.

On normal difficulty most of the enemies can only take a few squirts of machine gun fire and their only challenge is the sheer number of them that home in on your location. Step up the difficulty by a notch and you'll need to rattle through a few clips before they punch out. On that, it's a game to make you scream at your TV as you shoot, shoot and shoot some more, die and wait for an AI teammate to revive you. Luckily they're fairly competent and stick reasonably close by, but you'll also be plucking them out of the dirt a few times.

And, yeah, we get that it's turning up the cheese factor. The game has to revel in its own awfulness on purpose, as there are just enough hints of a working game underneath the woeful voice acting, the B-movie alien forces and the incessant ooh-rah and one liners of your squad.

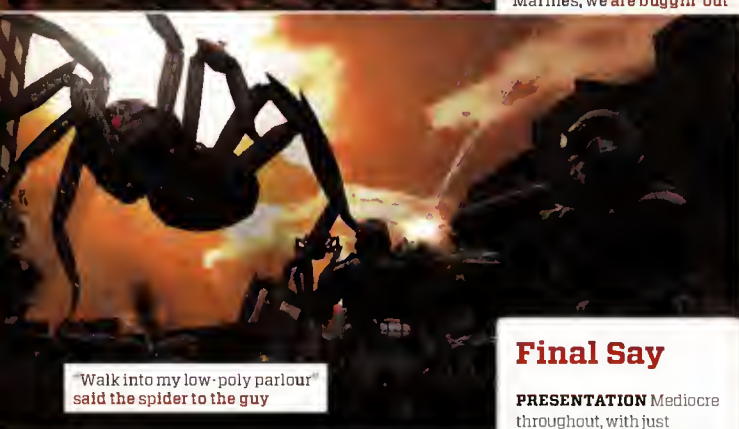




Shoot fly don't bother me



"Marines, we are buggin' out"



"Walk into my low-poly parlour" said the spider to the guy

There are a few nice touches, like the buildings that are caught in the crossfire come tumbling down in a clipped mess of polygons and flat explosions. It's not a looker, which is fine, but you'll derive little joy from controlling your characterless avatar through each stage. There's nothing spectacular about this.

Nor are there any mid-mission checkpoints. Some may take this as a deliberate nod to old-school design and accept it as a stubborn challenge. Whatever you say, old-timer. Whether you're repetitively ploughing through a new stage or having to restart one from scratch you're essentially doing the same stuff over and over, like writing out lines on a blackboard.

The lines might change but the actions remain the same. If you wanted to be sadistic you could recruit a mate in for split-screen, or go online for three-player co-operative, or you could try to survive wave after wave of nasties. In the end there are simply better ways to spend your time.

*Insect Armageddon* succeeds in one small regard. Good games should make you feel something. Unfortunately the emotion it frequently illicit is rage. While the price is about right, and measured against the games that came before it in the series *Insect Armageddon* doesn't look that bad. But that's a bung comparison in the wider tapestry of quality games out there that can be had for just a few bucks more.

Paul Taylor

## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** Mediocre throughout, with just enough spit and sticky tape keeping the whole thing together.

**SOUND** The worst voice acting this side of *Just Cause 2*. Comically awful.

**CONTROLS** If you've played a third-person action game before you know the drill. Otherwise, vanilla.

**REPLAY VALUE** It's a grind for a good seven or so hours, and while you have the chance to upgrade all the character classes we're not sure why you'd bother.

## Verdict

Dumb fun has its place, but this is an unfunny mess of too-old mechanics and painful progression. Leave it on the shelf.

5

# BUT NOW IT'S TIME TO TAKE IT BACK...



PS3

SONY  
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Play this  
if you like  
*Thor: God of Thunder*  
**FORMAT:** PS3  
**GENRE:** ACTION  
**RELEASE:** NOW  
**DISTRIBUTOR:** SEGA  
**DEVELOPER:** NEXT LEVEL  
GAMES  
**PLAYERS:** 1  
**RRP:** \$99.95

# Captain America: Super Soldier

Red, white and boo

**F**ive films into the Marvel Cinematic Universe (the self-produced series of films by Marvel that includes both *Iron Man* movies, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Thor* and now *Captain America*) and nothing has changed. Each of these films has come with a game tie-in and *Captain America: The First Avenger* is no exception.

Enter *Captain America: Super Soldier*.

In keeping with a tradition only further cemented by *Thor: God of Thunder* before it, *Captain America: Super Soldier* is just awful.

It's awful in a variety of different ways. Some disappointing games are victims of one or two bad ingredients tainting the overall aftertaste, like a chicken sandwich let down by slightly stale bread. *Captain America: Super Soldier* goes further. The bread is mouldy, the mayonnaise is sun-warmed and the chicken is still bleeding. It's hard to pin down what we dislike most.

You may have heard *Captain America: Super Soldier* compared to *Batman: Arkham Asylum* in the months leading up to its release. This is

because, superficially, this game desperately wants to emulate what made *Batman: Arkham Asylum* so great.

Like *Arkham Asylum*, *Captain America: Super Soldier* makes use of 360 degree combat – Cap can pummel opponents with a similar mix of strikes, grabs and counters. Like *Arkham Asylum*, *Captain America: Super Soldier* features a ranged attack mechanic, substituting batarangs for Cap's vibranium shield. Like *Arkham Asylum*, *Captain America: Super Soldier* features a tactical vision mode that causes key objects and areas of interest to be highlighted.

The similarities, however, stop at the surface. It's like comparing Amy Adams to Amy Winehouse. They're both women with the same amount of limbs but that's about where things end. You're only going to enjoy picking up one of them.

Unsurprisingly for a movie tie-in game, projects almost universally plagued by problematic deadlines and scant budgets, *Captain America: Super Soldier* reeks of corner cutting.

Look out the window of Cap's plane immediately after the opening stage. Clouds APPEAR to be blustering by but the nearby mountains to each side aren't moving; the plane is a static object hovering in the sky. It's like you're standing in a goddamn diorama beside

an industrial fan. This is a minor sin on its own but, as part of a raft of other significant problems, it's a good example of the overall lack of polish on display. *Batman: Arkham Asylum* this is not.

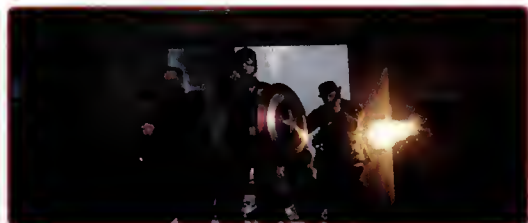
Bog-standard effects abound. Explosions are outright ugly, years behind

the pace. The shadows are jittery abominations that, at one point, we observed disappearing *undemeath* part of the floor geometry. Our shield boomeranged back to us THROUGH a solid object more than once and it's common to see an enemy's arms and legs vanishing into walls as they're falling about.

Punch a vase and watch it *blink out of existence*. All this kind of stuff really is inexcusable in 2011.

It's a game built to a bare minimum of specifications.

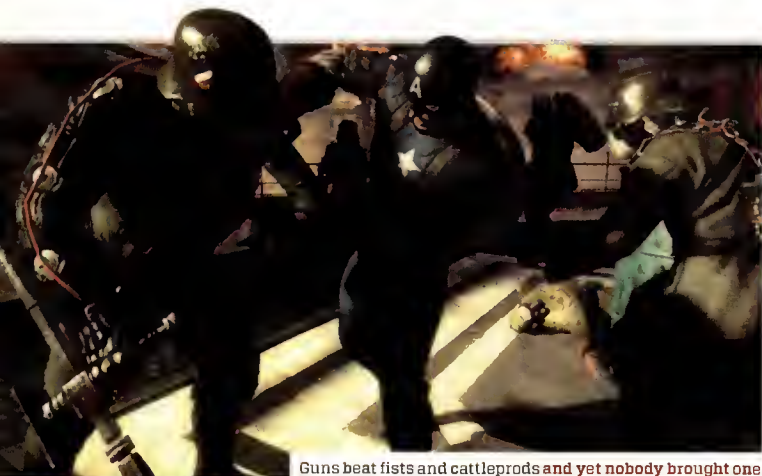
The paint-by-numbers levels themselves are bland and mostly empty, clad with only with the most primitive set



## The guns of never-own

In the trailer for *Captain America: The First Avenger*, Cap can be seen wading into a firestorm wielding a 1911 and (presumably) blasting fools like they owe him money. An on-set photo also revealed the Captain with a Thompson slung over his shoulder. The official collectable action figure comes with both a Colt 1911 AND a Thompson SMG. So why doesn't Cap carry firearms in *Captain America: Super Soldier*? Who knows? Most likely to keep the rating down. Lame, at any rate. The result is a bizarre, gentlemanly world where most of the Krauts you'll face off against have armed themselves with cattle prods, rather than rifles, to keep things balanced. It's WWII and almost everyone forgot to bring a gun: absurd.





Guns beat fists and cattleprods and yet nobody brought one



How do you make an Iron Cross? Punch it in the face, or at least tease it a little

dressing and containing little but the confusingly large number of secret dossiers the Hydra command has left lying about for Cap to find.

Enemy AI is rubbish. Raise your shield while surrounded by half-a-dozen enemies and they'll attack you one by one, every few seconds. Begin swinging and suddenly they'll all spring to life.

Combat is simple and uninteresting, lacking variety and crunch. It's not strictly a button-masher but that doesn't make it any less repetitive. A flurry or two of strikes and a few spinning kicks is about all we noticed in Cap's repertoire. Hit **○** and you'll counter. Hit **⊗** and you'll cartwheel about avoiding attacks. It's standard fare. There's a special four-stage meter that allows Cap to deliver crippling blows or weaponise an enemy's weapon against either other nearby foes or themselves. Fill the meter and you can activate Super Soldier mode, which sounds better on paper than it appears on screen. The first time we triggered it Cap simply dispatched every nearby enemy with identical roundhouse kick. Boring.

The platforming is a joke. Need to negotiate a series of acrobatic jumps and trapeze-like swings? Step up to the flashing icon and press **⊗**. Press **⊗** again when prompted. Press **⊗** again when prompted. Press **⊗** again when prompted. You're rewarded with points (that can be used for combat upgrades) for perfect timing but, that said, you can't fail these sections. No amount of monkey-like mashing will see Cap fall off his perch. You could drop your controller down a set of stairs and still negotiate these pointless platforming sequences.

*Captain America: Super Soldier* is rudimentary gaming at its worst, a tired old mélange of linear corridor crawling and basic brawling. It's utterly unsatisfying.

That the whole thing weighs in at a squidge over four hours only further sabotages any shred of quality that managed to smuggle itself into the final game. That recommended retail is five cents short of a tonne is even more offensive. Don't play this this. Play *Batman: Arkham Asylum*.

Already played *Arkham Asylum*? Play it again.

*Captain America: Super Soldier* functions – but there's no joy in this die-cut, A-to-B, walk-there-punch-him experience. **Luke Reilly**

## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** Party like it's 2007! Visually weak in all departments. We've seen better lip-synching on *The Muppet Show*.

**SOUND** Meh.

**CONTROLS** Cap himself feels like he's got little weight. Combat works fine but is unspectacular. "Timing-based" platforming sections are nothing more than moments of impossible-to-fail button bashing.

**REPLAY VALUE** Zero. There's no reason to play this once let alone twice.

## Verdict

In 2011 this game is completely redundant. Pull the plug on these timed videogame adaptations, Marvel. They're just not working.

4

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Optimus: still in his prime

# Transformers: Dark of the Moon

Made with minimal Energon expended

Very early on *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* opts to transform any enthusiastic player into an unimpressed one. This metamorphosis is achieved by not one, but two lengthy installs. The first takes a quarter of an hour in the PS3 dash and then, once you think you're home free, another one mugs you in the loading screens and makes off with 20 more of your minutes.

It's only *mildly* inconsiderate game design, but it's enough to stop most reasonable folk from crossing their fingers and hoping that there's "more than meets the eye" to this movie tie-in. It instead prepares them for the fact that there's going to be much, much less.

While *Dark of the Moon* is made by High Moon Studios and runs on the same engine that handled the surprisingly solid *Transformers: War for Cybertron*, this new adventure has been thrown together with half the budget and the same discount on love.

The gameplay retains High Moon's previous take on third-person shooting, with the ability to take the fight to your enemies in either Robot Mode, Driving Mode or Stealth Force. The first two options are fairly self explanatory, that last one is just a vehicle form that lets you strafe about on trolley wheels in a way that is never, ever seen in the film. This was clearly done because designing a decent, responsive four-

wheeled driving mode would have taken more effort than awkwardly porting over the "hover car" controls of the last game.

Whether you're stomping around as Optimus Prime, Bumblebee, Ironhide or Mirage – or their enemies Megatron, Starscream, Soundwave and Laserbeak – you'll find that half of your battles will be with the controls. You're required to constantly switch from Robot Mode to Stealth Force as each form has different benefits (as a humanoid you have much wider weapon access, but are vulnerable to fire – vehicles have stronger armour and firepower but your weapon zoom is that of George Costanza squinting). That said, each tactical switch is haunted by one of the most befuddling button scheme choices we've ever encountered.

In Robot Mode your zoom is on **RT** and your special 'whiz-bang weapon' resides on **LT**. Transform to Stealth Force and these inexplicably switch, with **LT** now zooming and **RT** now activates the Driving Mode which turns you into a car and auto-accelerates you forward. We lost count of how many times a furious firefight ended with us either wasting a special ability on thin air or barrelling out of cover to be turned into a smouldering chassis by our enemies.

This frustrating issue probably wouldn't be half as bad if the Driving Mode wasn't so bloody useless. Forget the fact that you can't easily brake; there's just something unnatural about steering a car around in third-person using the right stick. That sensation doesn't improve when you realise *Dark of the Moon* treats automobile handling physics as a theoretical science. Not only can you happily ricochet off objects with little, and thoroughly unrealistic, consequence but you can also hold in the nitro button and do 45



Float like a Camaro with airbags, sting like a Bumblebee





Robots in 'de skies'



What the console wars of 2099 will look like



Giant robots and tentacles. Japanese checklist complete

degree slaloms with zero loss of traction. You'll never quite feel comfortable in your metal skin.

The situation isn't improved by the fluctuating intelligence of your foes. In a stand-up fight the hordes handle themselves pretty well by regularly altering their own modes and tactics whilst displaying more pincer movements than a crab club secret handshake. However, in the many stealth-focused levels these elite robots show all the intelligence of eight foot tall Furbyes. Memorable moments include the way a group of enemies will forget about ruthlessly attacking you as Laserbeak if you morph into a fire extinguisher in front of them. Other times we found we could pick off patrolling Autobots in full view of their buddies without any robotard raising an optic.

Unfortunately, the hits keep on coming in the visuals department. Where the last game offered highly polished, exciting environments with cool sci-fi art direction, this latest game is a study in drabness, dilution and designer indifference. The 18 missions whisk you off to Jungles, Siberian military facilities, and bleak Detroit cityscapes but, though your GPS coordinates change, the same bugs follow you everywhere.

Turning a corner almost always triggers a little texture and shadow surprise party. But even when these environments do decide to draw in completely they're fraught with invisible walls, shadowless objects and some minor geometry (y'know, like a tree in the middle of the road) can be driven right through.

We also saw plenty of examples of unaligned objects and troughs in the ground where the

level designers couldn't have been arsed pushing the geometry close enough together. It's not just the finer details either, whilst under attack in the larger areas the frame rate chugs harder than Optimus Prime sculling a petrol tanker.

*Dark of the Moon* doesn't fare so well in the multiplayer stakes either, as it hastily photocopies what worked in *War for Cybertron*. There's support for up to 10 players across a paltry three game types and only five uninspired maps. Much like the rest of the game, the online shenanigans feel directionless and put together in a rush, making for a fairly soulless experience that will only be played by a diehard handful.

Honestly, we did our best to approach *Dark of the Moon* with an open mind. But it still managed to feel like a calculated fail by the moneymen who knew that this was always going to sell, regardless of how little effort was invested in it. As a movie tie-in this would be seen as an auto-buy for clueless parents.

Also, thanks to the critical acclaim of *War for Cybertron*, they knew there would be a good chance of Decepti-conning any hardcore Transformers fan hoping to Autobate over a sequel of similar calibre.

This is obviously just not the case here. Though this game can offer fleeting firefight fun it is constantly dragged down by questionable design and a severe lack of polish. Whichever way your eye meets it, *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* is out of this world ordinary and to expect anything better from it would be lunar-cy.

— Adam Mathew

## Get ready to split

As fans of the old-school Transformers cartoons we'd like to call out shenanigans on the modern take of Soundwave. *Dark of the Moon* the game is a prologue story that tells us how Megatron enlists him and uses him in his army. For some reason that role has him hiding not as a sneaky soundsystem, but as a cruddy soccer mum SUV.

## Play this if you like

*Transformers: RotF*

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3  
**GENRE:** ACTION  
**RELEASE:** NOW  
**DISTRIBUTOR:**  
**ACTIVISION**  
**DEVELOPER:** HIGH MOON STUDIOS  
**PLAYERS:** 1-10  
**RRP:** \$99.95

## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** Lazy level designs that positively reek of "rushed deadline". Attention to detail simply does not exist here.

**SOUND** The strongest part of the game. Decent weapon zap and voice acting that isn't crap.

**CONTROLS** Improves to 'serviceable' with time and practice but the first hour will kill you. Worst driving controls ever.

**REPLAY VALUE** Multiplayer is solid but uninspired. Will make any but the most diehard fans rolling out elsewhere after a few sessions

## Verdict

Textbook movie tie which is only sporadically fun. Ultimately, there's less than meets the eye to this.

5

Stop. Hammer time

Play this if you like

God of War III

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROS.

DEVELOPER: DOUBLE

HELIUM GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-2

RRP: \$69.95

# Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters

It's easy being green

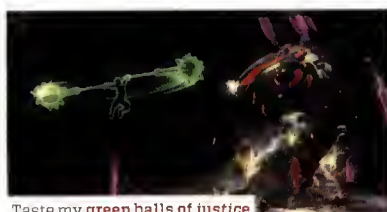
A sequel, of sorts, to the Ryan Reynolds flick in cinemas now *Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters* sees Green Lantern Hal Jordan called upon by the Guardians of the Universe to stop the robotic Manhunter menace. That's about all there is to know.

What follows is a love letter to *God of War* written in green crayon. The camera is fixed (though sometimes too far away for our liking) and the combat mirrors Kratos' outings right down to the quick-time events to finish off the game's larger bosses.

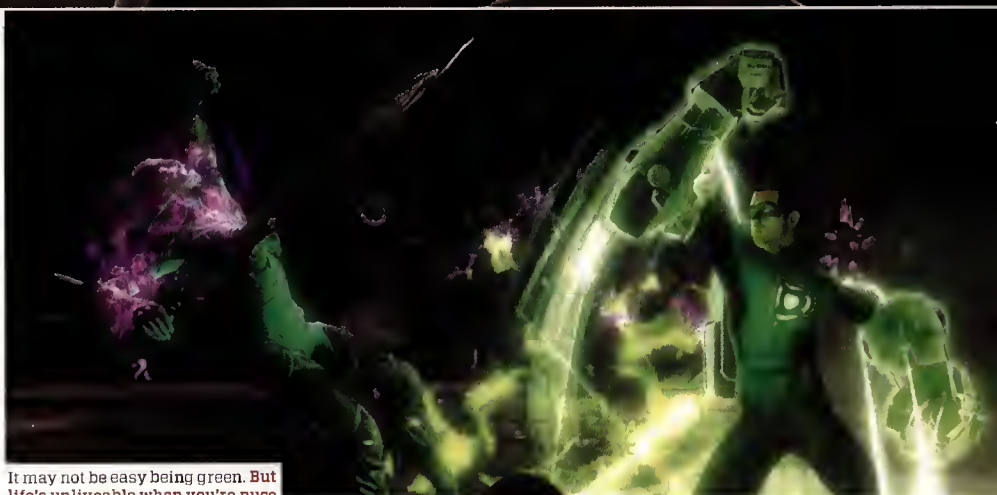
However, as effective as these QTEs are they mostly serve only to highlight the game's limitations. After triggering a finishing move on a large Manhunter halfway through the opening level, for instance, you'll watch Hal leap into the air and summon a massive chain gun which he uses to unleash a torrent of bullets into the beast's face. Naturally, the first question you'll ask yourself is, "Why am I wading through these goons with nought but a puny green sword and a pair of massive fists if I can clearly dream up the kind of armaments that would cut the moon in half?" Unfortunately, you're stuck with basic items like these until you upgrade your powers.

Players can use experience points built up throughout the levels to purchase new attacks and ring enhancements, and up to eight different hard light constructs can eventually be assigned to the controls at any time. There's more depth here than the opening half-hour suggests – more than *Captain America*, if that helps – and we don't really have any complaints with the way it functions. It's passable hack 'n slashery that neither severely disappoints or orgasmically excites. It just all seems a little arbitrary.

There's not too much variety either. Levels seem to stretch on and on and there's a fair



Taste my green balls of justice



It may not be easy being green. But life's unliveable when you're purple

bit of busywork to bolster the game's six or so hour length. A handful of on-rails flying levels break up the on-foot action occasionally but they're fairly basic and not especially gripping. The game does feature co-op, but it doesn't really add much to the overall experience either. The co-op player plays as Sinestro, but he's just a purple version of Hal, complete with all the same ring constructs (based on Earth items, which doesn't really make sense).

The thought that lingered with us all the way through the game is it's impossible to translate the full breadth of The Green Lantern's powers into a videogame. Placed in a life or death situation, with all the power of your imagination to protect you, why summon a set of oversized fists over, say, a tank? Why bother with a large, novelty hammer when you could have Teddy Roosevelt by your side, at the speed of thought, with a triple-barrelled shotgun in his hand and a shark launcher on his shoulder? We all have better imaginations than Ryan Reynolds.

For gameplay purposes, of course, none of that works. You need to start weak, end strong and make do with a series of pre-defined attacks. That's how games of this ilk work. But, as far as we understand it, that's NOT how The Green Lantern works – so why bother watering it down for a game at all? **Luke Reilly**

## Final Say

### PRESENTATION

Green. Decent enough, it's just that everything is morning-after Midori-spew green.

### SOUND

Nothing jumps out, although Ryan Reynolds sounds pretty unexcited to be involved.

### CONTROLS

Straightforward combat, easy enough to execute.

### REPLAY VALUE

Not much. It's not the worst game to slog through but we won't ever bother returning.

## Verdict

A serviceable *God of War* clone but hardly essential.

6

# Ape Escape

God schmod, where's our monkey man?

If you read only one sentence of this review, make it the next one. This is not the *Ape Escape* you loved from the halcyon days of the PSX and PS2, it is a poorly built wallet-trap smeared sticky with nostalgia. The 1999 *Ape Escape* was the first DualShock mandatory game ever produced and had the honour of proving the undeniable benefits of that fledgling peripheral. This latest *Ape Escape* demands the use of Move but doesn't convince anyone that failing is the future.

Unlike all the decent entries in the *Ape Escape* series, this game is an on-rails shooter rather than a platformer. The only control you do get is when your imaginary train-camera stops, whereupon you can awkwardly peer right and left using  $\otimes$  or  $\odot$  respectively.

Along with an underpowered slingshot you have a monkey-catching net and a harisen (read: giant paper fan for belting things). Slingshots are used to irritate monkeys (much like real-life), to destroy objects, and to shoot banana power-ups. The fan is used to blow away debris and smack simians. Last of all the net has you physically swinging at the monkeys who run right towards you.

The key phrase in that last paragraph:



"Run away towards the hunter for your lives!"

"monkeys who run right towards you". Last time we checked apes who escape tend to do so by high-tailing it in the opposite direction. In fact, that was something of a key feature, if not the whole point, of the previous three games. This flagrant disregard for commonsense or challenge is made extra annoying by a disembodied female voice shrieking "Gotcha!" when you do accost an ape. Every. Single. Time.

Aside from some lacklustre "special weapons", three 'meh' multiplayer mini-games and some hyperactively stupid anime cutscenes, *Ape Escape* doesn't offer much more. Like most Move titles of its ilk, this feels anorexic even for a budget price thanks to 15 short stages, flaccid weaponry and a noticeable lack of fun. Skirt around this snare or you'll cop the monkey spank of a lifetime. **A Adam Mathew**

## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** Vibrant, cartoony visuals. Monkeys are funny and animate well enough.

**SOUND** Competent most of the time with a few irritating repeated SFX and phrases.

**CONTROLS** Shooting is technically solid if uninspired. Net motion catches can be finicky.

**REPLAY VALUE** You'll peel this open, devour what little fruit there is and still be hungry.

## Verdict

Avoid witnessing this motion-based bastardisation of a classic.

4

## Play this if you like

*The Shoot*, apes who fail at escaping

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** ON-RAILS SHOOTER

**RELEASE:** NOW

**DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

**DEVELOPER:** JAPAN STUDIO

**PLAYERS:** 1-2

**RRP:** \$49.95



This was not the best of times it was the blurst



Proof that the net is full of stupid monkeys



## Cars 2

**FORMAT:** PS3 **GENRE:** RACING **RELEASE:** NOW  
**DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ **DEVELOPER:** AVALANCHE  
**SOFTWARE PLAYERS:** 1-4

When we noted the team behind the *Cars 2* videogame was the same that had brought us the surprisingly good *Toy Story 3* tie-in last year we hoped for the best. The result isn't necessarily going to T-bone *DiRT 3* or *SHIFT 2* out of your PS3 permanently, but *Cars 2* is actually a cracking little distraction.

A robust kart racer disguised as a licensed kids title, *Cars 2* features drop-in and drop-out local multiplayer for up to four players, a solid weapon and stunt system and visuals that capture the charm of the Pixar universe.

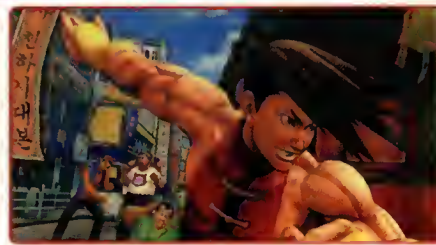


## UFC Personal Trainer

**FORMAT:** PS3 **GENRE:** FITNESS **RELEASE:** NOW  
**DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ **DEVELOPER:** HEAVY IRON  
**STUDIOS PLAYERS:** 1

Let's get one thing straight, grasshopper. *UFC Personal Trainer* is here to improve your core fitness. It is not however a font of martial arts knowledge that'll warrant changing your name to "Muhammad Damme Lee".

What you're looking at here is *Wii Fit* for angry people. That anger will increase when you see your Move setup (either one or two) frequently doesn't register sit-ups or other ground-based exercises well. Couple that with inaccurate virtual coaching calls and this is punch-worthy for all the wrong reasons.



## Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition

**FORMAT:** PS3 **GENRE:** FIGHTING **RELEASE:** NOW  
**DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM  
**PLAYERS:** 1-2

*Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition* adds four new characters to the mix, fattening the roster to 39 fighters. The new fighters include Yun and Yang from *Street Fighter III*, an Evil Ryu and Oni, a purple demon, but none of the four inspired us much.

The balancing has been massaged but overall this is a pretty small update for a game you may be a little exhausted with at this stage. As a boxed title \$70 is taking the piss; it's better value as the digital update.

**Verdict** A surprisingly solid kart racer and the only movie tie-in done right this month.

7

**Verdict** This needs rock solid Move detection and sound design to work. It's much too intermittent.

5

**Verdict** The definitive version of *Street Fighter IV*, but only for the hardcore or first-time purchasers.

8

# internet

NEWS, DLC,  
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## PSN DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

Some upcoming first-party Sony titles will require gamers to activate a code included with brand new copies, so that the game can be played online. This is similar to the system that EA and THQ use. The first game to use this PSN Pass will be *Resistance 3*. It means that gamers who buy used copies of the game – or rent certain titles – will have to purchase the PSN Pass if they wish to play online.

If you wondered what was happening to the *Burnout* series since Criterion sidestepped into the world of *Need for Speed*, they're back at the helm with *Burnout Crash*. And their new title is coming to the PSN.

The game takes the core concept of the crash mode made famous in *Burnout 3* and turns it into its own game. The purpose is to fling your motor through 18 different intersections, aiming to destroy as many cars and buildings on the way, and you're able to detonate the car multiple times. There's a twist though, as the game's no longer viewed from the usual floating or bonnet cams, and instead flicks the perspective to an overhead viewpoint. Expect it to land with a deafening bang before December.

Over the coming months there are a couple of titles transitioning to the PSN that we've been crossing our fingers for. The gorgeous, haunting *Limbo* will be available by the time you're reading this. It stars a single character in a 2D, monochrome world and it'll challenge your normal expectations of platformers as you guide the lonesome boy through a creepy world. Truly, jump in.

Also coming is *Castlevania: Harmony*



The view from OPS Towers

of *Despair*, a revamp of the classic side-on puzzle-platform formula. The PSN version includes a few extra playable characters, as well as an extra level compared to when it was originally released on other platforms. PS3 owners also get a brand new four-player local co-op mode, and we'll also be able to go online for six-player co-op.

Finally, the digital comics service is coming to an end on PSP. The service has over 4000 issues on it, and the most recent update at the start of July was the last. However, digital comics as a whole may still have a life, as the Digital Comics Team are continuing to make content for other Sony devices. We're not sure at this stage where or what they'll go to.



Spoiler: it'll probably kill you

## VIDZONE PLAYLIST SPOTLIGHT

THIS MONTH: Funny Videos



### PENDULUM - SLAM

Skip the mildly depressing intro with a monologue and a bloke eating a sandwich, and you'll giggle when he's raving and wearing his tie like a bandana.



### MADNESS - DRIVING IN MY CAR

The original ska pranksters. It's a bit cheesy but the fun is more infectious than glandular fever in high school.



### WE ARE SCIENTISTS - NOBODY MOVE, NOBODY GET HURT

The gag is a man in a bear suit chasing the rockers through city streets. Yes, you will smile.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available free on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13,000 music videos at the push of a button!

## PlayStation®Network

## ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



### YOOSTAR 2 - HOT FUZZ

Nicholas Angel and Danny Butterman go for a drink in the pub and share a heartfelt moment – until Danny sticks a fork in his eye. It's a snip under \$3, though the Cornetto's not included.



### GEX: DEEP COVER GECKO

One of the PSone's original platforming heroes, this third outing for the lizard was his last. "They just don't make 'em like this anymore," you'll say, as you wipe away a tear.



### MOTOR TOON GRAND PRIX 2

It looks like a kiddy, cartoon world but the structure is solid. Kazunori Yamauchi designed it – squint hard enough you can see the roots of *Gran Turismo* spreading below the surface.



### OUTLAND

We reviewed this a few months ago, right before the PSN went down – and it's pretty good. Now it's well and truly back you should get this stylish platformer that relies on your sense of exploration and timing.



### OF: RR - VALLEY OF DEATH

This pack for *Operation Flashpoint: Red River* gives eight new Fireteam engagements for the single player game, or you can recruit three mates to tackle them online, together.

# WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



PlayStation®Network

**GENRE:** SHOOTER **RELEASE:** NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION **DEVELOPER:** TREYARCH **PLAYERS:** 1-18 **RRP:** \$21.95

## DLC > Call of Duty: Black Ops - Escalation

A B-grade, all-star team

On paper, it sounds like a curious joke. Her from *Buffy*, Sarah Michelle Gellar, joins him from *Machete*, Danny Trejo, while Freddy Kruger – Robert Englund – and *The Walking Dead*'s Michael Rooker round out the four playable characters in the new zombie mode. Meanwhile, one of the masters of horror, George A. Romero, will try to eat your face.

And yet, it's happening. The zombie map's central structure, a red and white striped lighthouse, towers over zip lines and tunnels that spawn undead nasties. Storms bluster in to obscure your vision while you blitz around, spending points to open new routes and try to stay in one piece. Regular *Black Ops* players will lap it up and while the theme sounds gimmicky, it just works.

For your money (and, crikey, that's a number of dollars to spend) you also get four more regular multiplayer maps. Convoy criss-crosses over with a

devilish gap you need to be mindful of, and with the multiple layered buildings you'll discover your favourite areas.

Stockpile teases at tactical locations, and its centrepiece is a weapons depot with sliding doors. They've surely already lead to games of psychological warfare, based on knowing who's going to be in there and who's going to take advantage of thinking they're in there.

Hotel is a rooftop map littered with money amongst a sauna, pool and casino, and it's fairly splendid to look at visually. Snipers will love it, too.

Finally, there's Zoo, empty of animals but filled with intricate shortcuts.

### VERDICT

Worth it. It's the most popular shooter on the planet, and that zombie map is excellent.



Zombies: they're a real gas

You can't see our car, as we slid off the road and into some trees



**GENRE:** RACING **RELEASE:** NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS **PLAYERS:** 1 **RRP:** \$12.95

## DLC > DiRT 3 - Monte Carlo

You'll go bananas for it

One of the major gripes we had for *DiRT 3* was that there just weren't enough rally tracks, and that the tracks that were used were repeated a few times too many. Solving one half of that problem is this Monaco track pack, joining Finland, Michigan, Norway and Kenya as pure rally locations. You're still going to see the same bits of scenery reused here and there, though.

Codies have smartly taken one of the most iconic locations in Rally history, the Col de Turini located in the posh country of Monte Carlo, and turned it digital. In real life the tarmac surface is often littered with snow and ice, and it's the same here.

Those seven other tracks are also narrow, winding and with a sheer cliff face dropping off either side. Shortcuts are a luxury, and piloting a car as it rattles over the cold, loose scrub at night is a buttock-clenching moment.

If we could have our time over with this, we'd install the Monte Carlo

track pack before barrelling through the DiRT Tour. While you can select all eight tracks from the single player menu to race or perfect in a Time Trial, they are also injected into the campaign, boosting your rep and XP. If you've already finished the main game you can go back through and mop them up, of course. Best for thrills is the Lancia Integrale, though you can't beat the Mini for authenticity.

The pack should be a success, not least because it adds much needed content to an underweight part of the game, but because it'll encourage more of the same. Targa Tasmania would be excellent, thanks.

### VERDICT

A touch expensive but an excellent locale, and it feels very fast. More like please, Codemasters. The rally stages still need some love!



PlayStation®Network

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



### CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

**DEVELOPER:** TREYARCH **PLAYERS:** 1-16

Take *MW2* and add in some insanely addictive contracts and inventive modes in the multiplayer proper. However, we especially like playing *Zombies* with a skilled compatriot.



### RED DEAD REDEMPTION

**DEVELOPER:** ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO **PLAYERS:** 1-16

The connection issues that bothered us are well and truly fixed, so there's no excuse not to jump on, form a posse and start hunting for challengers. Much better as a co-op experience.



### SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

**DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM **PLAYERS:** 1-4

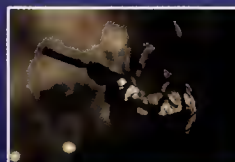
It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a bunch of lads and lasses hanging around, marvelling at your quarter-circle technique. Champagne gaming.



### FIFA 11

**DEVELOPER:** EA SPORTS **PLAYERS:** 1-22

Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. It's still as compelling and smooth as last year's effort. Get on it right now.



### BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

**DEVELOPER:** DICE **PLAYERS:** 1-16

You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves.

► MAKE YOU FAMOUS

# Tips on creating a shockingly good UGC mission in inFAMOUS 2

When it comes to succeeding at User Generated Content, subtle penis references and the title “THABEST1PLZTRYLOLOLOLOL!!!” will only get you so far, if anywhere at all. Here are a few tips on how to make something worthy of not only capturing the attentions of your fellow *inFAMOUS 2* players, but maybe even Sucker Punch themselves



## Free for all vs. structured ambushes

Resist the urge to clump enemies in one big goon gaggle; everybody does it and it reeks of laziness. Mix it up a little and keep the player on the backfoot with intelligently placed baddies that make varying use of their individual strengths. For example, a chaingunner in an overwatch position will force your victim to keep their head down and to improvise. Just remember that every challenge you issue should have a solution nearby. Nobody likes having their arse unfairly handed to them.

## Make 'em work for it

It's not the destination, it's the journey. As such, make the player actually traverse to get to the good stuff. Let them get comfortable with where they are in New Marais and then spring something on them. It beats the hell out of throwing the kitchen sink at them the very second your mission starts. Maybe Cole begins on a boat ride into hell, maybe he has to collect items and piece together a few clues before – *dun, dun, dun* – he gets mauled by mutants.

## Explosions always rock

Jerry Bruckheimer knows it. Michael Bay knows it. Now you know it. Once you learn the fine art of guiding a player in a linear path through the level you will know where they're not going to be. Once you ascertain that you can turn those locations into billowing balls

of fire. Add a sense of danger by positioning an explosion behind a sacrificial lamb enemy. Angle it so that the physics engine flings them at the player's expected path. All that's left is to use the text object a bit further on down the path to drop an action movie one liner.

## It's pure logic, Jim

Learn how to correctly use Logic Boxes. Connecting these will direct the events of your mission and there are two types of Logic Boxes, those that send signal and those that receive signal. Send signals are looking for a condition to be matched. They watch for something specific to happen to their group and then fire their outputs activating their attached receivers. You should also learn to use advanced techniques including waypoints, pins, switches, volumes, monitors, and checkpoints.

## Spin a yarn description

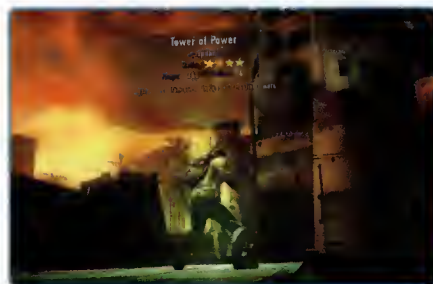
You don't have to be Stephen King here, just come up with something better than “Ur here to kill all da baddies” – do you really want to sound like you're simply texting somebody instructions? A good start to a mission should perhaps begin with Zeke calling you up to ask you to handle 'x' disturbance in 'y' part of town. However you frame it try to have some drama to the proceedings (introduction, terrible situation and a resolution to said shenanigan). Also, bad spelling can cheapen the value of anything (see?), so bust out a dictionary and get it right the first time.

## Beatdown to a soundtrack

Don't forget to choose some music from the available scores. Understand that tone and mood in a level can make an experience truly memorable. There's nothing more annoying when you're listening to something hi-octane when you're collecting objects (wool!), or a dreary tune when 50 rednecks are doing their best to smash you.

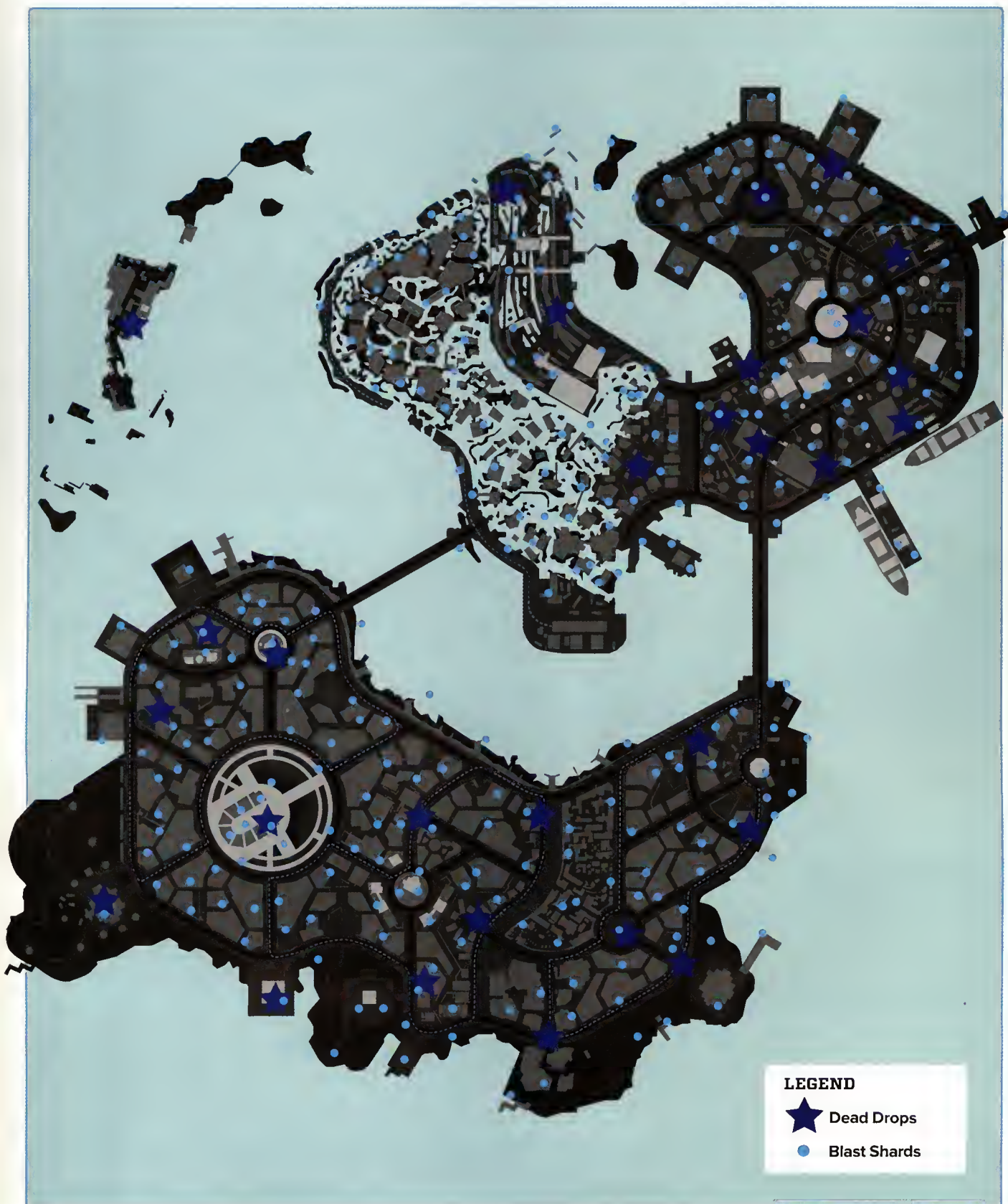
## Playtest that sucker

As a non-professional level designer you have the luxury of not rushing out your work to meet a deadline. Therefore, whenever you think you've finished something we suggest you walk away from it for an hour, come back with a fresh mind and re-check the hell out of everything. Interweb folk aren't the most forgiving bunch of brigands out there, and the first impression your level gets is often the last.



# A cavalcade of collectables

New Marais is lousy with pickup items and pigeons to splatter. Here's a handy map to help you scratch things off as you go!



► MUST WATCH

# Fast & Furious 5 (M)

**DIRECTOR:** JUSTIN LIN **CAST:** VIN DIESEL, PAUL WALKER, JORDANA BREWSTER, TYRESE GIBSON, CHRIS 'LUDACRIS' BRIDGES, MATT SCHULZE, SUNG KANG, DWAYNE JOHNSON **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

Most franchises run out of steam long before they hit their fifth instalment. This one has just found its stride.

Since former cop Brian O'Conner (Walker) and Mia Toretto (Brewster) broke Dom Toretto (Diesel) out of custody they've been on the run. Backed into a corner in Rio de Janeiro, and with hard-nosed federal agent Luke Hobbs (Johnson) on their tail, they must pull one last job in order to gain their freedom.

What *Fast & Furious 5* does is turn a movie we expected to be ostensibly driven mostly by street racing into a heist movie, and it's top fun. Director Justin Lin, who handled the last two sequels (including the rubbish *Tokyo Drift* and the passable-but-no *Point Break* *Fast & Furious*), has actually nailed a formula that truly works.

We're as surprised as the next guy; one of the best action flicks of 2011.

Watch this if you like *The Fast and the Furious*

### Verdict

Features the best car chase in the series so far, and dropping the magnetic Dwayne Johnson into proceedings was a masterstroke.

8



We found the make-out scene a bit much, though

One of the best action flicks of 2011



# RoboCop (R18+)

**DIRECTOR:** PAUL VERHOEVEN **CAST:** PETER WELLER, NANCY ALLEN, DAN O'HERLIHY, RONNY COX, KURTWOOD SMITH, MIGUEL FERRER **AVAILABLE (RENT)** \$3.99 (OWN) \$12.99, 1610MB (SD)

All this talk of cyborg limbs and crappy *RoboCop* games this issue had us paralysed with a justice itch that only an evening with Paul Verhoeven's 1987 sci-fi classic *RoboCop* could itch.

We're pretty sure there's a rule against not having seen *RoboCop*; it's on the PSN movie store so there's no excuse. At the very least you'll understand why all your mates found *That '70s Show* funnier than you did; they were all waiting for the dad to throw Topher Grace out the back of a van.

Set in a crime-ridden Detroit in the "near future" a

brutally slain police officer is brought back to life as a super-human cyborg known as RoboCop.

Watch it again before they remake it; they're already planning to.

**Verdict** A crucial sci-fi classic that deserves permanent praise. Can you fly, Bobby?

9

## PlayStation Store

### ► TOP TEN

# Movies on Demand



- 1 **Unknown** Warner Bros.
- 2 **Gnomeo & Juliet** Touchstone
- 3 **127 Hours** Fox
- 4 **Jackass 3.5** Paramount
- 5 **Love & Other Drugs** Fox
- 6 **Green Lantern: Emerald Knights** Warner Bros.
- 7 **Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows** Warner Bros.
- 8 **Hereafter** Warner Bros.
- 9 **Megamind** Dreamworks
- 10 **Unstoppable** Fox

Now available to rent or own on PlayStation Store

The PlayStation Network Video Store offers hundreds of titles available to rent or own at the click of a button!





## The Melancholy of Haruhi-Chan Suzumiya - Nyoron! Churuya-san Part 2 (PG)

**DIRECTOR:** YASUHIRO TAKEMOTO **CAST:** AYA HIRANO, TOMOKAZU SUGITA, MINORI SHIHARA, NATSUKO CHIHARA **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

**A** caveat: this series of micro-episodes will be incomprehensible if you haven't seen the phenomenal high-school sci-fi dramedy *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*. Fans may still be feeling burned after the 'Endless Eight' time loop episodes from season two, yet this saccharine-soaked chibi-sized sketch show is so densely-packed with gag comedy, it's almost as if the producers are trying to make amends. Superior to the similarly-paced *Hetalia Axis Powers*, and as amusing as the Mini-Pato eps bundled with *Patlabor 3*.

**Watch this if you like** *The Melancholy of Haruhi-Chan Suzumiya & Nyoron! Churuya-San, Azumanga Daioh*

**Verdict** Highlights include cosplay contests, and chicks wearing scungies.

7



## K-On! - Volume 1 (PG)

**DIRECTOR:** NAOKO YAMADA **CAST:** AKI TOYOSAKI, ASAMI SANADA, AYANA TAKETATSU, CHIKA FUJITO **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

**A** quartet of ultra-cute, ultra-cliched, and surprisingly well-animated high school girls sets out to master contemporary rock music, fuelled by sugary cake snacks, and buttressed by the irrepressible power of friendship.

The real appeal of *K-On!* is down to the quirky interaction between the leads – the clumsy one, the enthusiastic one, the posh one, and the repressed one – as they muddle through a succession of low-intensity music challenges. While *K-On!* is ostensibly about rehearsals, the heroines seem to spend most of their time having tea parties. Oh, and going to the beach and stuff, so you can see them in their swimsuits.

**Watch this if you like** *Beck, Nodame Cantabile*

**Verdict** The show's appeal stems from the goofy interaction of the leads.

8



## Evangelion: 2.22 - You Can (Not) Advance (TBC)

**DIRECTOR:** HIDEAKI ANNO **CAST:** KOTONO MITSUISHI, MAAYA SAKAMOTO, MEGUMI HAYASHIBARA, MEGUMI OGATA, YUKO MIYAMURA **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

**T**he second in a planned series of four *Neon Genesis Evangelion* 'Rebuild' movies, in which the mega-smash-hit blockbuster TV series from the '90s has been re-cut, re-mastered, and re-imagined for the new millennium and a new batch of eager fans.

Unlike the last film, the events in 2.22 deviate significantly from those in the original series, with the fiery ranga Asuka and the morose Shinji depicted as far more likeable characters. The animation and costume designs are new, and they've even shoe-horned in a new teenaged giant robot pilot, the enigmatic, preppy, and bespectacled Mari.

**Watch this if you like** *Gekiganger, Gunbuster*

**Verdict** Explosive action, and the tripped-out plot will be hotly debated for years to come.

9

### ▶ GIVEAWAY

# Robot Chicken Star Wars Special 3

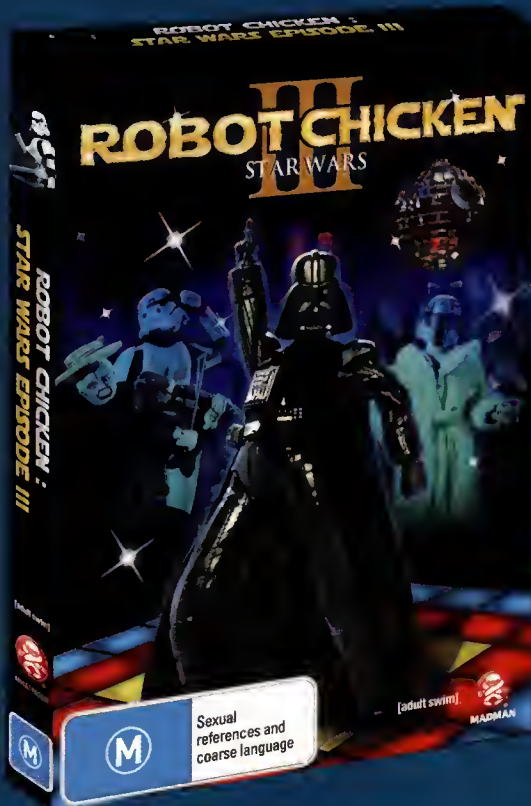
**T**he Emmy Award-winning *Robot Chicken* returns to DVD with its third send-up of the *Star Wars* universe! In this all-new hour-long special, four very different characters – Emperor Palpatine, Darth Vader, Boba Fett and Gary the Stormtrooper – reveal untold stories that weave and interconnect throughout all six *Star Wars* films!

Thanks to Madman we have five great prize packs featuring all three *Robot Chicken Star Wars* specials. For a chance to win simply answer the following question and follow the entry instructions below.

**Question: In 25 words or less, what makes *Star Wars* such a rich source of zany parodies?**

### HOW TO ENTER

To enter Official PlayStation Magazine competitions email your entries to [ops@citrusmedia.com.au](mailto:ops@citrusmedia.com.au) with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to OPS competitions PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW, 2002. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions closes 02/11/2011. Winners will be notified by mail.



▶ NOW SHOWING

## Transformers: Dark of the Moon (M)

**DIRECTOR:** MICHAEL BAY **CAST:** SHIA LABEOUF, FRANCES MCDORMAND, JOSH DUHAMEL, ROSIE HUNTINGTON-WHITELEY, TYRESE GIBSON  
**IN CINEMAS:** NOW

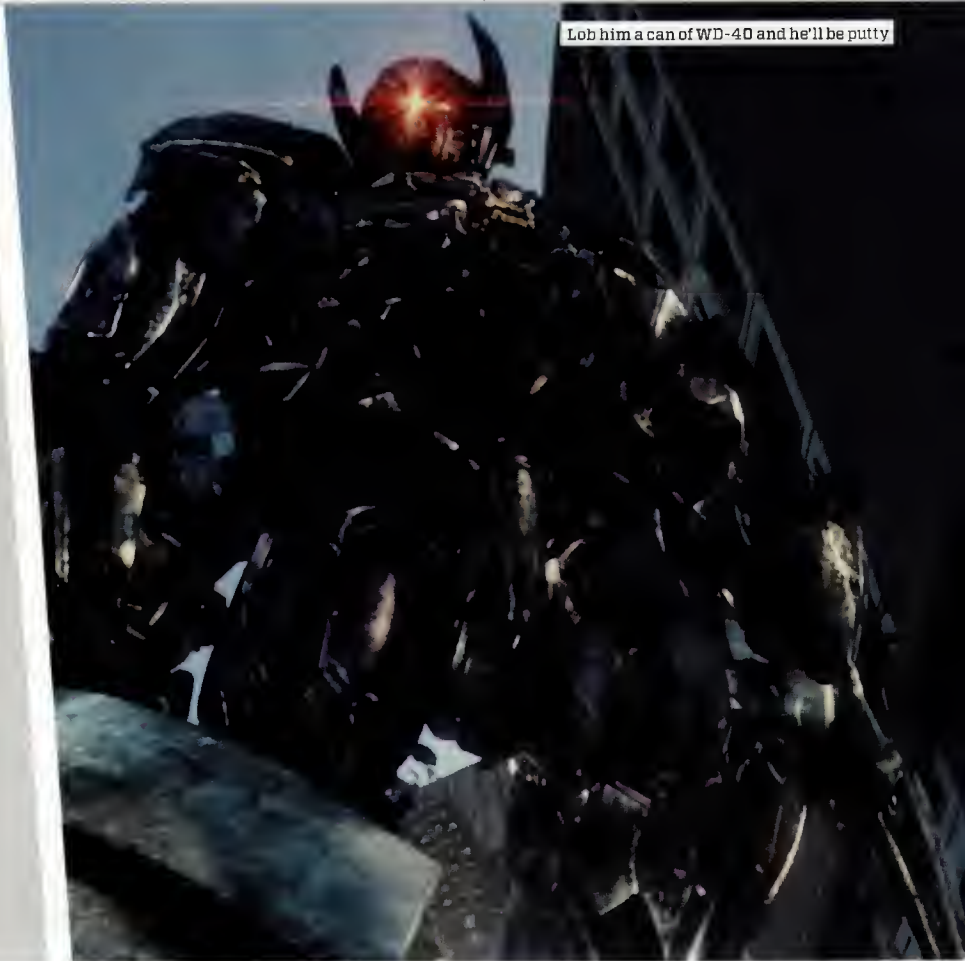
**P**ro tip: go to the toilet before you stick your 3D specs on and settle in to watch Michael Bay's latest. Not because you'll wet yourself from excitement but because this bombastic explosion party is two-and-a-half hours long.

It feels like three movies in one and very few parts benefit from having humans in it. You're in this for giant robots shooting at and whaling on other giant robots and *Dark of the Moon* does an excellent job of that, though we wonder how much more punishment the Earth (well, America in particular) can take before it's pounded into rubble.

Still, it's a great premise. Back in the early 1960s NASA boffins learn that a gigantic craft has landed on the moon and it becomes an even bigger catalyst for the Space Race. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin get to the dark side of the moon before the Russians can and find a craft half buried under the surface with a gigantic metal man inside. They bring some interesting specimens back to Earth and we cue forward 40-odd years to the second opening shot, this time of English model Huntington-Whiteley's backside. Another moon, if you like. Explosions ensue.

If *Dark of the Moon* had been directed by someone with more of a steady hand and aimed beyond its demographic of bored teenage boys then we might have something more intelligent, but also something less spectacular. It's the best in the series and if you endured the last *Transformers* flick you'll feel redeemed by this.

**Watch this if you like** The other *Transformers* movies



Lob him a can of WD-40 and he'll be putty

"I would cling to you, tactically, even if you were an ogre"



## The Green Lantern (M)

**DIRECTOR:** MARTIN CAMPBELL **CAST:** KRYAN REYNOLDS, BLAKE LIVELY, PETER SARSGAARD  
**IN CINEMAS:** AUGUST 4

**T**est pilot Hal Jordan (Reynolds) takes a mystical green ring from a dying alien and discovers he has amazing powers, limited only by his imagination. The catch is that he must become one of the galaxy's protectors in the Green Lantern Corps, fighting a former Lantern called Parallax. And wear a lurid green suit.

Hal's cocky and is soon challenged by the other Lanterns who don't normally trust humans. Of course, he fits into the role bestowed on him, tightens his jaw and becomes the hero he must.

You'd be hard pressed to rock up to your nearest multiplex and not see a flick based on a comic-book on the screen. Considering just how many there are and will be – *Thor*, *X-Men*, *Captain*

*America* – you can let *The Green Lantern* slip until it's on Blu-ray or the PSN.

Where did it go wrong? It's not a historical inaccuracy that die-hard fans of the comic (anybody? Anyone at all?) will have to put up with. Nor is it the special effects that should entertain bored eyes. Rather, it's the cast and either their weightless performances or the lack of direction they've been given, save for Sarsgaard as Hector Hammond – a mind reading henchman of Parallax with a massive head – who is Hal's main rival.

Whatever. There are better superhero stories with more recognisable and identifiable characters, making this dead in the water. But what do we know? A sequel's already been announced.

The face of a killer



## Hanna (M)

**DIRECTOR:** JOE WRIGHT **CAST:** ERIC BANA, SADIROSE RONAN, CATE BLANCHETT  
**IN CINEMAS:** NOW

**F**ather-daughter duo, Erik (Bana) and Hanna (Ronan), hide out in snowy forests buried in the middle of Finland where Erik teaches Hanna how to be an assassin. For a 16-year-old she's deft at snapping necks and handling surprise attacks by her dad, who sometimes jumps her to test her mental and physical agility. She's a warrior that knows physicality but has no feeling.

Then they're pushed into the real world, and a chase begins where Erik and Hanna agree to meet in Berlin. Hanna, however, is being tracked by a CIA agent, Marissa (Blanchett), and must learn to rely on her skills as a warrior but also learn how to become a human being.

It's a cracking thriller that feels part-*Bourne*, part *Kick-Ass* but more grounded and without the swearing. You'll also be surprised by a few funny scenes, and as Hanna grows as a person and thaws out the locations change to reflect her transformation.

Ronan takes on the role with gusto, throwing herself into the action and the scenes between her and Bana are electric. Blanchett is on form and crafts a pretty convincing villain, too.

*Hanna* is a surprising and worthwhile flick to balance out recent popcorn fare, and it's getting a decent run across the country. Make sure you check it out.



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Volume 20

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# ON SALE NOW!

# index

## ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparative quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

### ACTION

**5D Cent. Blood on the Sand** 7  
SWORFISH STUDIOS  
So dumb it's dangerously good. Better than it sounds.

**Army of Two** 7  
EA MONTREAL  
Solid co-op thrills make up for its wasted potential.

**Army of Two: The 40th Day** 7  
EA MONTREAL  
Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the first.

**Avatar** 7  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
If you've got a 3D TV, buy it. If not, it's too derivative to bother.

**Bayonetta** 9  
PLATINUM GAMES  
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

**Bionic Commando** 7  
GRIN  
There are some great moments but they're few and far between.

**The Bourne Conspiracy** 7  
HIGH MOON STUDIOS  
Great presentation and vibe, samey action. Stylish but superficial.

**The Club** 8  
BIZARRE CREATIONS  
Original, compulsive and fun.

**Damnation** 3  
BLUE OMEGA ENTERTAINMENT  
Uninspired level design, broken gameplay.

**Dark Void** 6  
AIRTIGHT GAMES  
Uninspiring graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.



**DEAD RISING 2** 9  
DEVELOPER: BLUE CASTLE GAMES  
PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-4  
"You'll wear a stupid grin pretty much from start to finish and it's a riot in co-op. A must-play. The satisfaction of literally cutting down thousands of zombies with anything you can pick up is its only hook but it works a treat."

**Dead to Rights: Retribution** 6  
VOLATILE GAMES  
Fine, but doesn't do enough to stand out. Needs more dog.

**Devil May Cry 4** 7  
CAPCOM  
Memorable bosses but too much backtracking spoils things.

**Eat Lead: The Return of Matt Hazard** 6  
VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE  
Great concept and nice parody, but basic one-play stuff.

**Front Mission Evolved** 7  
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES  
Likable but limited mech-based combat.

**Genji: Days of the Blade** 5  
GAMEREPUBLIC  
Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, piss-poor plodding gameplay.

**Ghostbusters: The Video Game** 9  
TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE  
Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

**Hunted: The Demon's Forge** 7  
INXILE  
A textbook example of 'alright'. Co-op rules.

**Iron Man** 3  
SECRET LEVEL  
Filled to the brim with bugs. Substandard.

**John Woo Presents: Stranglehold** 7  
MIDWAY CHICAGO  
Packs frantic *Max Payne*-lite fun.



**JUST CAUSE 2** 9  
DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE STUDIOS  
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAID PARTNERS  
PLAYERS: 1  
"Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. It's dirt cheap as it's now part of the Platinum range. If you can dream it, you can do it in this insane action game."

**Kane & Lynch: Dead Men** 6  
IO INTERACTIVE  
A let down. Gets close to greatness before crashing back down.

**Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days** 7  
IO INTERACTIVE  
Michael Mann/YouTube visuals? Great. The game? Average.

**Lost Planet 2** 7  
CAPCOM  
Slim pickings for solo players but multiplayer buffs may dig it.

**Mercenaries 2: World in Flames** 8  
PANDEMIC STUDIOS  
Weak in many areas but has fun in spades. *The Saboteur* does it better, though.

**Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight** 3  
NAMCO BANDAID  
A rubber Godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

**Ninja Gaiden Sigma** 8  
TEAM NINJA  
A treasure trove of violent gaming goodness.

**Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2** 8  
TEAM NINJA  
A sexy and rock hard title but the gore's been cut.

**Prototype** 8  
RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT  
A simple superhero kill-fest but a truckload of guilty fun.

**Red Faction: Armageddon** 7  
VOLITION, INC.  
Brown, corridor-based action. Snore.

**Red Faction: Guerrilla** 9  
VOLITION, INC.  
The best destruction effects ever, hands down.

**Saints Row 2** 9  
VOLITION, INC.  
Puerile, mean-spirited and technically outclassed, if you care.

**SOCOM: Special Forces** 8  
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE  
Great online with *Move* and a *Sharp Shooter*, though solo ain't that special.

**SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Confrontation** 6  
SLANTSIX GAMES  
A sturdy effort that falls to excite.

**Terminator Salvation** 4  
GRIN / HALCYON GAMES  
An abysmal failure. Short, filled with glitches.

**Time Crisis: Razing Storm** 6  
NAMCO BANDAID  
Simple, short light gun fare. Ignore the new first-person shooter mode, it's awful.

**Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2** 8  
RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT  
A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets.

**Transformers: War for Cybertron** 7  
HIGH MOON STUDIOS  
Good multiplayer, and that's about it.

**Vanquish** 8  
PLATINUM GAMES  
Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

**Wanted: Weapons of Fate** 5  
GRIN  
Designed only to appeal to mentally-subnormal 11-year-olds.

**Warhawk** 9  
INCOGNITO ENTERTAINMENT / SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO  
Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on light night.

**WET** 8  
A2M  
Tonnes of grindhouse style, little substance.

**Wheelman** 6  
MIDWAY STUDIOS - NEWCASTLE / TIGON STUDIOS  
Rubbish low-speed handling and underdone throughout.

**X-Men Origins: Wolverine** 7  
RAVEN SOFTWARE  
A head slicin' chest beater of a slash 'em up.

### ACTION-ADVENTURE

**3D Dot Game Heroes** 7  
FROM SOFTWARE  
If you pine for the past this should keep you entertained.

**Alice: Madness Returns** 7  
SPICY HORSE  
Marries great ideas and concepts with average to awful platforming.

**Assassin's Creed** 10  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
A landmark, though slightly dated now.

**Assassin's Creed II** 9  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor.

**Assassin's Creed Brotherhood** 10  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
The pinnacle of the series so far and the multiplayer is outstanding.

**Batman: Arkham Asylum** 8  
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS  
Really delivers the goods. Best Batman game ever. Best superhero game full stop.

**Brütal Legend** 9  
DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS  
Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it's settled: Tim Schafer is God. Cheap, too.

**Castlevania: Lords of Shadow** 9  
MERCURY STEAM  
Easily one of the best games of 2010.

**Clash of the Titans** 4  
GAMEREPUBLIC  
A piss-poor action game lacking in every way.

**Dante's Inferno** 8  
VISCERAL GAMES  
Derivative but well-produced and good fun.

**Darksiders** 8  
VIGIL GAMES  
It'll test your patience but persevere and your satisfaction will swell.

**Dead Space** 9  
EA REDWOOD SHORES  
Super tense. The future of survival horror.

**Dead Space 2** 9  
VISCERAL GAMES  
What it loses in isolation it makes up for in storytelling. Still scary.

**Demon's Souls** 7  
FROM SOFTWARE  
Those looking for an extreme challenge may have met their match.

**Enslaved** 8  
NINJA THEORY  
A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's *Monkey* was.

**Fairytale Fights** 7  
PLAYLOGIC GAME FACTORY  
Quirky and sadistic but too simplistic.

**Folklore** 8  
GAMEREPUBLIC  
Original and surprising with moments of genius.

**The Godfather: The Don's Edition** 6  
EA REDWOOD SHORES  
It made for a decent PS2 game but skip this port. It's not worth it.

### Bionic limbs

Nathan whoever from *Bionic Commando* and *Deus Ex's* Adam Jensen provide tantalising if terrifying visions of the future with their metal limbs. Real robotic prosthetic limbs rely on signals from muscles that contract when the nerves they're connected to are activated, and the brain still retaining sub-conscious contact with the missing, 'phantom' limb. See page 16 for more.



**Bolt-action**

Cole MacGrath was struck by neuro electricity once and he's been the human equivalent of a Tesla coil ever since. However, an American man, Roy Sullivan, couldn't generate enough volts to power a globe, despite being struck by lightning a record seven times over 35 years. He survived all of the strikes. The likelihood of someone in the US being struck by lightning once in their lifetime is 1 in 10,000.



**The Godfather II** 6  
EA RED WOOD SHORES  
Starts as a decent crime caper but alienates fans of the film. Play *Mafia II* instead.

**ESSENTIAL God of War III** 10  
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO  
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking, astonishing visuals.

**RECOMMENDED God of War Collection** 9  
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO / BLUEPOINT GAMES  
Age has not diminished its impact. Purchase immediately.

**Golden Axe: Beast Rider** 4  
SECRET LEVEL  
Destined for the chopping block. No co-op? Boo!

**ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV** 10  
ROCKSTAR NORTH  
The technical scope and scale of *GTAIV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.

**ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City** 9  
ROCKSTAR NORTH  
Two new single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer and a vast array of new weapons and vehicles. Explosive shotgun? Yes please.

**Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince** 6  
EA BRIGHT LIGHT STUDIO  
Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

**Heavenly Sword** 9  
NINJA THEORY  
Slick graphics and refined combat. A bit short though.

**RECOMMENDED inFAMOUS** 9  
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS  
A superpowered take on the urban crime-fighting sandbox. Get this and the sequel.

**NEW inFAMOUS 2** 9  
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS  
Bigger and better, and the level editor is solid.

**LEGO Batman** 7  
TRAVELLER'S TALES  
Sound and faithful, but the formula is getting a bit old.

**LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4** 7  
TRAVELLER'S TALES  
The most thorough LEGO universe yet.

**RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures** 9  
TRAVELLER'S TALES  
Happiness and wonder overcame us with this joyous adaptation.

**NEW LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean** 7  
TRAVELLER'S TALES  
You should know from the title if you'd like this or not. It is what it is, and it's okay.

**LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars** 8  
TRAVELLER'S TALES  
Bum subject, excellent lightsaber action. Kids should adore it.

**Lost: Via Domus** 6  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

**Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom** 7  
GAME REPUBLIC  
A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned. If you can find it cheap grab it for a rainy day.

**Mafia II** 8  
2K CZECH  
Its attention to detail, presentation and sound is to be admired.

**ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots** 10  
KIJIMA PRODUCTIONS  
Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game but the production values are insane. A titan amongst games. Epic.

**Overlord II** 8  
TRIUMPH STUDIOS  
Refined gameplay and more jokes but control quirks persist.

**Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End** 6  
EUROCOM  
Looks the part but unfortunately it doesn't feel or play the part.

**Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands** 8  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Worth your time but better swordplay could've really helped.

**RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time** 9  
INSOMNIAC GAMES  
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

**RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction** 8  
INSOMNIAC GAMES  
A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.



**RED DEAD REDEMPTION** 10  
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO  
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR PLAYERS: 1-16  
"A sweeping epic that's among the best games we've ever played. We're not lying when we say it's better than *GTAIV* in a lot of crucial areas. Also, the zombie-themed *Undead Nightmare* DLC is boss."

**RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5** 9  
CAPCOM  
A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

**RECOMMENDED The Saboteur** 8  
PANDEMIC STUDIOS  
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

**SAW II: Flesh & Blood** 6  
ZOMBIE INC.  
Lacks finesse but boasts some decent puzzles.

**NEW Shadows of the Damned** 7  
GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE  
Full of dick jokes and so-so gameplay.

**Silent Hill Homecoming** 6  
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES  
New combat system is good, but lacks the cerebral chills.

**Sonic the Hedgehog** 4  
SONIC TEAM  
There are cheaper ways to get a spare Blu-ray case.

**Sonic Unleashed** 6  
SONIC TEAM  
Hey! It's the least awful Sonic game in years!

**Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions** 5  
BEENOX  
Looks great – but why have we gone back to swinging from invisible hooks in the sky?

**Spider-Man: Web of Shadows** 7  
TREYARCH / SHABAGAMES  
Swift and tidy but not exactly deep.

**Star Wars: The Force Unleashed** 7  
LUCASARTS  
Fails to use its idea to maximum effect.

**Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II** 6  
LUCASARTS  
Gets a point-and-a-bit for hour that it is long. Technically superior but still rough.

**RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent** 9  
UBISOFT SHANGHAI  
Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

**Toy Story 3** 7  
AVALANCHE SOFTWARE  
Cute, simple, and charming as hell.

**ESSENTIAL Uncharted: Drake's Fortune** 10  
NAUGHTY DOG  
Awesome plot, awesome graphics, awesome action. This owns.

**ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves** 10  
NAUGHTY DOG  
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.

**Viking: Battle for Asgard** 7  
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY  
Slow attacks and weak visuals but it has its appeal.

**RECOMMENDED Yakuza 4** 8  
CSI TEAM  
One for the fans, but it's very refreshing.

**ADVENTURE**

**RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain** 8  
QUANTIC DREAM  
Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.

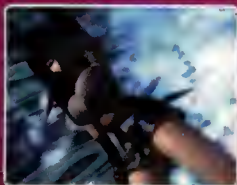


**L.A. NOIRE** 10  
DEVELOPER: TEAM BONDI  
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR PLAYERS: 1  
"The game world itself is the most detailed we've ever seen. If Team Bondi's Los Angeles was a skirt she'd be a blonde. A blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained glass window. The patient mix of slow-paced adventure gaming and well-executed open world action is hugely satisfying."

**Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust** 1  
TEAM17 SOFTWARE  
An amazing new low for this generation.



THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation®Store



**FINAL FANTASY VII**  
DEVELOPER: SQUARE  
PLAYERS: 1  
The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, Final Fantasy VII is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



**DRIVER**  
DEVELOPER: REFLECTION  
INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1  
The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through 3D cities may old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted it was like nothing we'd seen.



**CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED**  
DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG  
PLAYERS: 1  
The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-built levels goes, this is the zenith.



**SYPHON FILTER**  
DEVELOPER: EIDETIC  
PLAYERS: 1  
If you still think *Syphon Filter* was a MGS rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.



**MEDIEVAL**  
DEVELOPER: SCE STUDIO  
CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS: 1  
Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's *Sir Dan*? Fantasy hack 'n slash stills does it better than most since.



## inhouse

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

# BioWare

LOCATION: EDMONTON, CANADA FOUNDED: 1995  
BEST KNOWN FOR: MASS EFFECT 2

You could consider BioWare for being a marquee studio that demonstrates to the world it is possible to not only put RPGs on consoles, but to also make them entertaining, successful and well-liked. Along with Obsidian and Bethesda it has primarily concentrated on the one genre, occasionally dabbling in other fields.

BioWare founding members, Dr. Ray Muzyka and Dr. Greg Zeschuk, were both practicing medicine when they decided to make videogames. They graduated from university in 1992 and their career was to be designing medical software. Instead, they used their money to develop games.

Speaking to ex-Shiny Studios head, David Perry, Zeschuk said, "Both of us worked our 'day jobs' as doctors for the first few years of BioWare's development concurrent with our work at the company; we would work nights and weekends and then funnel most of the money back into BioWare to spend it on the demos we were working on. It was pretty tough for about four years until things started picking up momentum and we were able to retire from medicine. Since then there's been no looking back."

BioWare's first game, *Shattered Steel* released in 1996, sharing similarities with the robot combat title *MechWarrior*. The studio earned acclaim with the release of *Baldur's Gate*, a game considered

amongst critics to have revitalised the RPG genre on PC and Mac. The game spawned a number of expansions and sequels and, whilst it contained reams of text you'd struggle to plough through now, it highlighted BioWare's devotion to deep storylines and rewarding gameplay.

For over 10 years, BioWare created and developed original IP, as well as infrequently delving into other franchises. The studio had been working with publisher Interplay on *Baldur's Gate*, and during a meeting on that title Interplay offered BioWare the chance to craft a sequel to *MDK*. It would be its first console game, and it was released on the Sega Dreamcast, PS2 and PC. After that came *Baldur's Gate II* and the *Neverwinter Nights* series from 2000 to 2003.

In 2005, BioWare began to change and grow as they merged with Pandemic Studios. The two studios were officially owned by a group called VG Holding Corp, but retained their own identities and logos. BioWare Austin was established in March 2006 and in 2008 EA bought both BioWare and Pandemic Studios.

See the *Dragon Age* and *Mass Effect* series for examples of the studio's commitment to crafting games with deep universes.

## FIGHTING

**Battle Fantasia** 7  
ARC SYSTEM WORKS  
A nice curiosity but, seriously, get *Super Street Fighter IV*.

**RECOMMENDED BlazBlue: Continuum Shift** 9  
ARC SYSTEM WORKS  
Still wilder, wackler and noisier than anything else on PS3.

**FaceBreaker** 7  
EA CANADA  
Great look but very unbalanced.

**The Fight: Lights Out** 5  
COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE  
The Move controls don't feel as organic as we'd hoped they would. Sorry Danny Trejo.

**The King of Fighters XII** 3  
SNK PLAYMORE  
Grey, old and well beyond retirement. Irredeemable..

**RECOMMENDED Marvel vs. Capcom 3** 8  
CAPCOM  
Fast, fun and gorgeous. Features Haggar.

**NEW RECOMMENDED Mortal Kombat NETHERREALM** 8  
TECHNICALY NOT AVAILABLE IN AUS, IT'S A STERLING RETURN TO FORM FOR THE SERIES. FUNNY, TOO.

**Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe** 7  
MIDWAY GAMES  
A fun game with mass appeal but not very technical.

**RECOMMENDED Soulcalibur IV** 8  
NAMCO BANDAI  
Phenomenal, but will let down those expecting a revolution.



**SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV** 10  
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM/OIMPS  
PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2  
"With the 'vanilla' versions vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay - but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price - *Super Street Fighter IV* belongs in everyone's collection."

**RECOMMENDED Tekken 6** 8  
NAMCO BANDAI  
Easy to play, with the biggest roster ever. Feels a bit old, though.

**TNA Impact!** 6  
MIDWAY STUDIOS - LOS ANGELES  
Arcade-style biff but needs more content.

**WWE Legends of WrestleMania** 6  
YUKE'S  
Gets by on retro charm but feels absolutely ancient.

**WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010** 8  
YUKE'S  
If the soap-drama of the WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana.

## FLIGHT

**Apache: Air Assault** 7  
GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT  
Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though.

**Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII** 7  
UBISOFT ROMANIA  
A simple aerial blaster. Flawed but fun.

**Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII** 6  
UBISOFT ROMANIA  
Solid, varied, but not quite the ace of aces.

**Heroes Over Europe** 7  
TRANSMISSION GAMES  
A little rough but not bad. *IL-2* is much better, though.



**IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY** 8  
DEVELOPER: GAJJIN ENTERTAINMENT  
PUBLISHER: AFA PLAYERS: 1-16  
"Head turning visuals, astonishing attention to detail, brilliant sound effects and stacks of ratta-tat action all combine in this truly surprisingly awesome aerial combat game. To be honest it's the best flight game we've ever played."

**Lair** 5  
FACTOR 5  
It feels rushed and unfinished. Deeply disappointing.

**Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.** 7  
UBISOFT ROMANIA  
Tight and accessible but a bit sterile.

**RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2** 8  
UBISOFT ROMANIA  
A top gun successor. More detail, better mission design.

## THE BEST PSP GAMES



**GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES**  
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEEDS  
PLAYERS: 1-6

This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP - and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. No, we're totally serious.



**MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE**  
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM  
PLAYERS: 1-4

*Monster Hunter* is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, rewarding you in spades if you're able to put the effort in. Even better with mates.



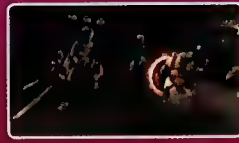
**WIPEOUT PULSE**  
DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL  
PLAYERS: 1-8

Beautiful and weighted just right, it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason *Wipeout* just works - and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just pips the likes of *Burnout Legends* and *Gran Turismo* for best racing game on PSP.



**METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER**  
DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS  
PLAYERS: 1-5

A proper, well-produced and thought-out *Metal Gear*; this is a must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough; buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This is a title that no gamer should miss.



**GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA**  
DEVELOPER: READY AT OAWN  
PLAYERS: 1

Stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

## MUSIC

**AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack** 7  
HARMONIX  
Bare-bones stuff but the music is worth it. Fully exportable.

**Band Hero** 7  
NEVERSOFT  
Robust but the over-zealous censorship grates a lot.

**RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band** 9  
HARMONIX  
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

**RECOMMENDED DJ Hero** 9  
FREESTYLEGAMES  
Tough to write off as a gimmick.

**RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2** 9  
FREESTYLEGAMES  
Some great improvements and some excellent, unique mixes.

**RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band** 8  
HARMONIX  
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

**Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock** 9  
NEVERSOFT  
The last *GH* with a mostly decent soundtrack.

**Guitar Hero World Tour** 9  
NEVERSOFT  
Good, but missing crucial elements that make *Rock Band* better.

**Guitar Hero 5** 7  
NEVERSOFT  
Improving, but the hipster tracklist is a dud.

**RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica** 8  
NEVERSOFT  
The best in the series since *Guitar Hero III*.

**Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits** 7  
BEENOX  
Great past *GH* tracks with full band support. Seriously though, why wasn't it just DLC?

**Guitar Hero: Van Halen** 6  
UNOERGROUND DEVELOPMENT  
Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA *GH5* buyers got it as a free bonus.

**Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock** 7  
NEVERSOFT  
Functional, but it just isn't evolving at the same rate as its peers.

**LEGO Rock Band** 8  
HARMONIX / TRAVELLER'S TALES  
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

**Michael Jackson The Experience** 5  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Better with mates but feels cheap.

**ESSENTIAL Rock Band** 10  
HARMONIX  
The best party game ever, until the sequels.

**ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2** 10  
HARMONIX  
The best music game series around.

**RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3** 9  
HARMONIX  
Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

**SingStar** 8  
SCE LONDON STUDIO  
Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

## PARTY

**EyePet** 7  
SCE LONDON STUDIO  
Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

**Hail to the Chimp** 3  
WIDELOAD GAMES  
Want to lose friends? Play this with them.

**Kung Fu Rider** 3  
JAPAN STUDIO  
Waggle-based rubbish. A terrible example of a Move game.

**PlayStation Move Heroes** 7  
NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE  
One for undemanding kids. Fun but bland.

**The Shoot** 6  
COHORT STUDIOS  
A good Move rail shooter. Cool presentation. It won't blow your skirt up forever, though.

**RECOMMENDED Sports Champions** 8  
ZINOAGI GAMES  
Despite a few quirks this is the must-have Move title.

**Yoostar 2** 7  
BLITZ GAMESTUDIOS  
Imperfect yet hilarious movie karaoke title.

## PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

**RECOMMENDED de Blob 2** 9  
BLUE TONGUE ENTERTAINMENT  
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems

**RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever** 8  
NAMCO BANDAI  
Joyfulness, digitally realised. Infectious.

**RECOMMENDED LittleBigPlanet 2** 9  
MEDIA MOLECULE  
Like the original it's innovative and never-ending. Improves upon an amazing product.

**RECOMMENDED The Sly Collection** 9  
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS  
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

## RACING

**Blur** 7  
BIZARRE CREATIONS  
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

**RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise** 9  
CRITERION GAMES  
Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

**Colin McRae: DiRT** 9  
COEEMASTERS  
Plenty of real rally action, unlike its sequel.

**Colin McRae: DiRT 2** 7  
COEEMASTERS  
Flashy and drives fine but it's style over substance here.

**RECOMMENDED DiRT 3** 8  
COEEMASTERS  
A welcome return to form. Great car roster, awesome handling, incredible sound. The gymkhana events are a highlight.



## GRAN TURISMO 5 9

DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL  
PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-16

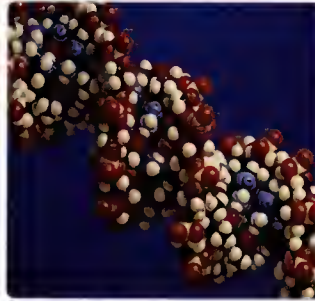
"*GT5* feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

**Fuel** 4  
ASOBO STUDIOS  
Huge, but buggy, boring and undercooked.

**RECOMMENDED F1 2010** 9  
COEEMASTERS  
A white-knuckle racer and an authentic title. Heaps better with a Logitech wheel

**Midnight Club: Los Angeles** 7  
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO  
Visually weak, but sprawling and busy locale.

## Gene-ius



Sonic the Hedgehog turns 20 this year. His popularity some years back contributed to the decision by scientists to name a new protein Sonic hedgehog (SHh). The original hedgehog gene was found in a genus of fruit flies that had tiny spines growing out of their backs, giving them a hedgehog-like appearance. SHh is related to the same effect on mammals, alongside desert hedgehog and Indian hedgehog.

**RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers** 9  
UNITED FRONT GAMES  
An incredible package. Creating is even more fun than racing.

**MotoGP 10/11** 6  
MONUMENTAL GAMES  
Dull presentation and crap controls wreck it.

**MotorStorm** 10  
EVOLUTION STUDIOS  
Fast, hard and dirty. Things have come on a lot since 2007 though.

**MotorStorm: Pacific Rift** 8  
EVOLUTION STUDIOS  
Boasts splitscreen but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

**MotorStorm Apocalypse** 8  
EVOLUTION STUDIOS  
The new locale lacks a little charm but the racing is as fast and frantic as ever.

**NEW MX vs. ATV Alive** 5  
RAINBOW STUDIOS  
A step backwards for a series that peaked on PS2 and has gotten lamer since.

**RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit** 9  
CRITERION GAMES  
Smooth, compelling and absolutely beautiful arcade racing.

**Nail'd** 7  
TECHLANO  
Fun knockabout ATV arcade racer that needed a bit more dev time.

**RECOMMENDED SHIFT 2: Unleashed** 9  
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS  
Incredible sense of speed, frantic racing and plenty of depth. Tops even *GT5* in many crucial areas. Features Mount Panorama.

**Need for Speed: Undercover** 5  
EA BLACK BOX  
Faulty and adds nothing since *Most Wanted*.

**RECOMMENDED Pure** 9  
BLACK ROCK STUDIOS  
One of the best arcade racers on the market.

**RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID** 9  
COEEMASTERS  
A born-to-rage racing rebel. Good but lacks the *Race Driver* vintage, despite the name.

**NEW SBK 2011** 7  
MILESTONE  
Fairly similar to the last one, but with a new Challenge mode and tweaked handling.

**SEGA Rally** 7  
SEGA RACING STUDIO  
Familiar, old-school arcade fun, though it feels tired in 2011.

**Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing** 7  
SU MO DIGITAL  
Fun but shallow. Copies from the best but missing a crucial spark.

**RECOMMENDED Split/Second** 8  
BLACK ROCK STUDIO  
Doesn't feel as sharp as *Burnout* but it's a true challenger.

**SuperCar Challenge** 7  
EUTECHNYX  
Admirable effort but feels a little bland.

**Superstars V8: Next Challenge** 7  
MILESTONE  
An improvement but it's still more shallow than it thinks it is.

**Test Drive Unlimited 2** 7  
EODEN GAMES  
Massive and ambitious but the cars handle like go-karts in glue. Second-rate visuals, too. Playable but disappointing.

**RECOMMENDED WRC** 8  
MILESTONE  
Drab graphics, imperfect sound, but a joyfully robust driving model.

## RPG/ACTION RPG

**Alpha Protocol** 5  
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT  
Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever.

**Ar tonelico Ooga: Knell of Ar Ciel** 7  
GUST  
Defiantly old-school JRPG. One for the fans.

**Cross Edge** 3  
COMPILE HEART  
Every benchmark of excellence has been missed. Offensive.

**DC Universe Online** 7  
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT  
Pretty but shallow, and expensive subs too.

**NEW Dungeon Siege III** 6  
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT  
Sluggish combat and an arse-backwards upgrade system. Quite pretty, though.

**RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins** 8  
BIOWARE  
As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.

**RECOMMENDED Dragon Age II** 8  
BIOWARE  
Accessible but lacks immersion. One step forward and two steps back from *Origins*.

**ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion** 10  
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS  
Simply put: awesome.

**Hyperdimension Neptunia** 8  
IDEA FACTORY  
A pastiche on modern videogames. Very, very weird JRPG with neat attack strategies.

**ESSENTIAL Fallout 3** 10  
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS  
It's *Oblivion* in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, and it's utterly brilliant.

**RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas** 8  
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT  
A great ride but you've been on it before.

**RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII** 8  
SQUARE ENIX  
Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action but missing a little magic.

**Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2** 7  
VICARIOUS VISIONS  
A compelling romp but the button-mashing play needs updating.

**ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2** 10  
BIOWARE  
Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi. An action RPG without peer.

**Resonance of Fate** 6  
TRI-ACE  
Deep, but also wordy, clunky and ugly.

**Sacred 2: Fallen Angel**  
ASCARON ENTERTAINMENT  
Gigantic, but feels very slapped together.

**Valkyria Chronicles**  
SEGA WOW  
Strategy/RPG heads should not miss this.

**NEW White Knight Chronicles II**  
LEVEL 5/JAPAN STUDIO  
A JRPG for those who like to grind.

## SHOOTER

**RECOMMENDED Aliens vs. Predator**  
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS  
One of the best movie-inspired titles ever. Beyond brutal.

**RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company**  
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE  
Destructible environments and humour. Together at last.

**RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2**  
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE  
A top-tier shooter with a deeply dedicated online community, but the single-player mischief of the original is M.I.A.

**RECOMMENDED BioShock**  
IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN  
Grown-up gaming at its best.

**RECOMMENDED BioShock 2**  
2K MARIN / DIGITAL EXTREMES / 2K AUSTRALIA  
Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat has been spiced to near-perfection.

**BlackSite: Area 51**  
MIOWAY STUDIOS - AUSTIN  
A pedestrian shooter that needed more time in the lab.



**BORDERLANDS**  
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE  
PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4  
"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better. It takes the best elements from RPGs and fuses them to a superb shooter. The result: the most rewarding co-op to date, and there's a stack of great DLC for it too. Great value."

**RECOMMENDED Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway**  
GEARBOX SOFTWARE  
The most authentic WWII shooter ever made, and certainly the most realistic.

**6 Brink**  
SPLASH OAMAGE  
Runs a good online race. Faceplants as a solo experience.

**8 Bulletstorm**  
PEOPLE CAN FLY  
Inventive but saves the best stuff for the final couple of hours. Graphically struggles, too.

**ESSENTIAL Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare**  
INFINITY WARD  
It's still relentlessly exciting.

**ESSENTIAL Modern Warfare 2**  
INFINITY WARD  
Like three games stuffed into one. We still love the co-op Spec Ops mode.

**RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Black Ops**  
TREYARCH  
A generous package with great solo and online play. The presentation's excellent too.

**ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: World at War**  
TREYARCH  
A class act. War at its worst (and best). Proof you can make a great WWII game set (partially) in the Pacific. Plus, Nazi Zombies.

**Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood**  
TECHLAND  
A cinematic and action-packed Western shooter that's better than you probably think.

**RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena**  
STARBREEZE STUDIOS / TIGON STUDIOS  
Moody and fresh. A must play. You don't need to know the movies to enjoy it either.

**Condemned 2: Bloodshot**  
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS  
Gripping stuff. We were blown away. Shame the original isn't on PS3.

**RECOMMENDED Crysis 2**  
CRYTEK  
Diabolically pretty and challenging. A welcome reprieve from the glut of corridor shooters that demands intelligence and grit.

**RECOMMENDED The Darkness**  
STARBREEZE STUDIOS  
Stunning, original and gory as hell. Hopefully the sequel rocks this hard.

**7 NEW Duke Nukem Forever**  
3D REALMS/GEARBOX SOFTWARE  
12 years too late. Outclassed and dated.

**F.E.A.R.**  
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS / DAY 1 STUDIOS  
A chilling ride, but the graphics could've been sharper.

**F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin**  
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS  
An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.

**RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2**  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
A technical open-world bell-ringer but the travel time will grate.

**Haze**  
FREE RADICAL DESIGN  
Patchy visuals, tragic level design and dismal AI.

**RECOMMENDED Homefront**  
KAUS STUDIOS  
Polished but blink-and-you'll-miss-it single player. A fine alternative to CoD multi, though.

**RECOMMENDED Killzone 2**  
GUERRILLA GAMES  
Lives up to the hype. Amazing graphics, hectic action.

**RECOMMENDED Killzone 3**  
GUERRILLA GAMES  
Epic firefights and an engrossing storyline. It's also a winner with Move.

**Legendary**  
SPARK UNLIMITED  
A rushed mess. Terrible.

**RECOMMENDED MAG**  
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE  
Shooter junkies take heed: this is where it's at for online combat.

**RECOMMENDED Medal of Honor**  
DANGER CLOSE / DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE  
Not sexy but it's a gritty, realistic shooter with great atmosphere.

**RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge**  
EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE  
A true original that makes some grand leaps in design.

**5 Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising**  
COOEMASTERS  
Authentic but niche. Very unforgiving.

**8 RECOMMENDED Operation Flashpoint: Red River**  
COOEMASTERS  
A massive improvement on its predecessor. Fun solo, but co-op over the PSN is awesome.

**7 RECOMMENDED The Orange Box**  
EA UK / VALVE  
Get it for Portal, keep it for Half-Life 2.

**8 RECOMMENDED Portal 2**  
VALVE  
One of the most brilliant games ever.

**Quantum of Solace**  
TREYARCH  
Has too many faults to be compelling.

**RECOMMENDED Resistance: Fall of Man**  
INSOMNIAC GAMES  
A fantastic launch title with sweet weapons.

**RECOMMENDED Resistance 2**  
INSOMNIAC GAMES  
Fast, furious and stuffed with action.

**Rogue Warrior**  
ZOMBIE STUDIOS / REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS  
A fiasco. We tried to like it but it's too short and too terrible.

**Singularity**  
RAVEN SOFTWARE  
Had potential but wasn't quite worth the wait.

**Sniper: Ghost Warrior**  
CITY INTERACTIVE  
The novelty will be enough for sniper fans. Regular FPS folk won't be able to forgive its sloppy execution.

**TimeShift**  
SABER INTERACTIVE  
A solid attempt that doesn't quite reach 88 miles per hour.

**RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas**  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Slick, good-looking and utterly engaging.

**Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2**  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Not as good or as cool as the first one.

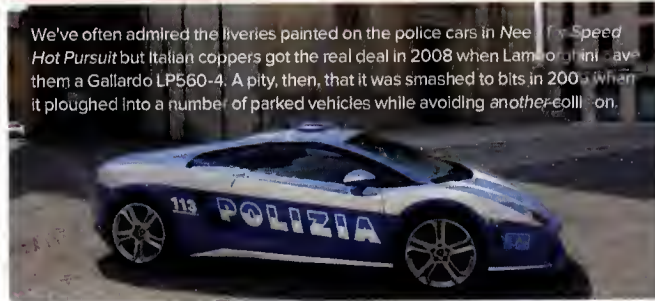
**Turning Point: Fall of Liberty**  
SPARK UNLIMITED  
Scrappy throughout. Great concept, bogus execution.

## SPORTS

**2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa**  
EA CANADA  
FIFA 10 with a World Cup facelift. A bit pricey.

**AFL Live**  
BIG ANT  
Does a decent job of things and it's better than Rugby League Live.

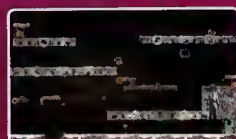
## Fast cops



We've often admired the liveries painted on the police cars in *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit* but Italian coppers got the real deal in 2008 when Lamorgina gave them a Gallardo LP560-4. A pity, then, that it was smashed to bits in 2009 when it ploughed into a number of parked vehicles while avoiding another collision.



## THE BEST PSN GAMES ON PlayStation®Store



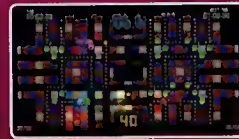
**BRAID**  
DEVELOPER: HOTHREAD  
PLAYERS: 1  
A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming, it's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man.



**PIXELJUNK SHOOTER**  
DEVELOPER: Q-GAMES  
PLAYERS: 1-2  
Take control of a tiny ship and navigate your way through various caverns, rescuing any survivors along the way. Of course, there's interesting gameplay mechanics thrown into the mix, such as fluid water and lava dynamics that need to be used to solve puzzles.



**FLIGHT CONTROL HD**  
DEVELOPER: FIREMINT  
PLAYERS: 1-4  
Possibly the most addictive and accessible PSN title available. The premise is simply to guide the aircraft on-screen to their respective runways. That's it – but you'll be totally hooked. One of the best games to play with PlayStation Move too.



**PAC-MAN CE DX**  
DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANCAI PARTNERS  
PLAYERS: 1  
More than an update, this is a revolution. The 'CE' stands for 'Championship Edition', and is a mash of different maps and modes revolving around guiding Paccers through the dots and eating ghosts. This is begging to be your new addiction.



**PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES**  
DEVELOPER: POPCAP GAMES  
PLAYERS: 1-2  
The smash hit on PC lands on PSN, and this tower defense title plays beautifully with a controller. You have a variety of plants to defend your end of the lawn while the undead shuffle and eat their way across. Extremely addictive and actually loaded with braains.



How to camp



The Ghille suit, worn by Price and MacMillan during the *Call of Duty 4* mission 'All Ghillied Up', is a staple of snipers in various armies around the world. While a well-constructed suit will do an excellent job of making you look like a shrub or a yeti with a sniper rifle, they're heavy, cumbersome and it's not something you'd relish wearing on a hot summer's day. You can buy them from a shop but a pro will construct their own.

**Ashes Cricket 2009** 6  
TRANSMISSION GAMES  
Disappointing, but stick through the ugly for some multiplayer beauty.

**Backbreaker** 7  
NATURALMOTION  
Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in a sports game.

**Beijing 2008** 5  
EUROCOM  
Not the worst of its type but far from a game to buy and keep.

**EA Sports MMA** 7  
EA TIBURON  
Great controls but struggles to be convincing.



**FIFA 11** 9  
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA  
PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22  
"While *FIFA 12* looms, *FIFA 11* remains a bafflingly brilliant update. If you've skipped the last few *FIFA* updates boost the score by one. Seriously, it's that good. This is the best-selling sports game in the world and it's not hard to see why."

**RECOMMENDED Fight Night Champion** 9  
EA CANADA  
Refined controls, excellent story mode and super-quick gameplay. Near perfect.

**International Cricket 2010** 7  
TRICKSTAR GAMES  
Not the most comprehensive cricket game but certainly the best when you're on the pitch.

**John Daly's ProStroke Golf** 5  
GUSTO GAMES  
Those looking for a high production value golf game should give this the shaft.

**RECOMMENDED NBA 2K11** 8  
VISUAL CONCEPTS / KUSH GAMES  
Hard court high priest Michael Jordan stars in perhaps the best basketball game ever.

**RECOMMENDED NBA Jam** 8  
EA CANADA  
A faithful and fun update to the '90s classic. He's on fire!

**Pro Evolution Soccer 2011** 8  
KONAMI  
Good for a goal fix, still second best overall. Get *FIFA 11*.

**Rugby League Live** 5  
BIG ANT  
Not as complete a game as the last one on PS2 and the whack team ratings frustrate. The Melbourne crew at Big Ant did a slightly better job with *AFL Live*.

**Shaun White Skateboarding** 6  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Kudos for the quirky touches but the skating itself is pretty bland.

**Shaun White Snowboarding** 6  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Lacks the fine touch of realism or the excitement of lunacy.

**Skate** 9  
EA BLACK BOX  
A well-balanced masterpiece and true *Tony Hawk* killer. Trumped by its sequels.

**RECOMMENDED Skate 2** 9  
EA BLACK BOX  
One of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense and packed with natural lines and the balance is sublime.

**RECOMMENDED Skate 3** 8  
EA BLACK BOX  
Better in many ways, although the city isn't as cool as *Skate 2*.

**RECOMMENDED Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12** 8  
EA TIBURON  
Great golf game but we don't like the way the day one DLC is teased via the career mode.

**Tony Hawk's Project 8** 7  
NEVERSOFT  
No real reason to revisit this post-*Skate* at all.

**Tony Hawk's Proving Ground** 6  
NEVERSOFT  
Bloated and inconsistent. Pass.

**Tony Hawk: RIDE** 4  
ROBOMODO  
Pure frustration made plastic.

**RECOMMENDED Top Spin 4** 8  
2K CZECH  
More accessible than its predecessor with a DualShock, as the Move controls are spotty.

**RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 2010** 8  
YUKE'S  
The new undisputed baron of sports fighting.

**Vancouver 2010** 6  
EUROCOM  
A handful of events that last one afternoon.

**RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 4** 8  
SUMO DIGITAL  
Superb Move controls and supremely pretty.

STRATEGY

**RECOMMENDED Civilization Revolution** 8  
FIRAXIS GAMES  
Great fun and shockingly addictive.

**RECOMMENDED R.U.S.E.** 8  
EUGEN SYSTEMS  
Niche but supremely well-crafted strategy. Better with Move, too.

**The Sims 3** 7  
THE SIMS STUDIO  
Waiting to pounce on the right type of gamer.

**Stormrise** 4  
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY  
A cack-handed, future war mess.

**Tom Clancy's EndWar** 7  
UBISOFT SHANGHAI  
Far from a finished product. Works, but it's hardly an essential purchase.

infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

2000: MICRO MANIACS



CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION GENRE: RACING DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS  
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UK CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$15 (EBAY)



The premise, in both the storyline and justification, for *Micro Maniacs* is thinner than skim milk. It was a spin off of the successful and popular *Micro Machines*, a franchise that started on the Nintendo Game Boy and then spread like a *Lemming* pandemic to other formats by 1993.

But it was in name only, as the *Micro Machines* brand began as a line of die cast toys, smaller than the more recognisable (and still available today) Matchbox cars and Hot Wheels vehicles. *Micro Maniacs* may not have been created if it wasn't for the fate of the games and franchises that preceded it.

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Anyway, *Micro Machines* (the games) were a freakin' hit on the SEGA Megadrive. A new version came out year after year until landing on PlayStation with *Micro Machines V3* in 1998, taking the top-down formula, making it 3D and bungling in more weapons – giant hammers, pincers, missiles and so on – as well as the vehicle-specific arsenal. You can thank *Mario Kart* for that.

Then *Micro Maniacs* gestated for three years, replacing the cars with tiny people. The premise was that the world was becoming overpopulated, so a mad scientist decides to shrink humans down

to a miniscule size so we could all be accommodated on our packed planet. Of course, he needs test subjects, so he recruits a bunch of volunteers and runs them through various urban gauntlets to make sure we could survive. It had a similar track style to the *Micro Machines* games, like racing around a living room covered in toys, or an elaborate outside setting with detritus from your backyard, such as bricks, drainpipes and so on.

It's missing the point, surely. Matchbox cars and *Micro Machines* were cool because they're tiny versions of machines that you'd never actually own, and you could pretend to be playing with the cars on your carpet, or your breakfast table, or your maths homework, or wherever. Codies saw that and turned it into the first *Micro Machines*. Plus, it's pretty hard to make a person powerslide and cars are cool.

But it's a cult favourite. The racers (runners?) had way more personality than a car, tank or boat could and the tracks were pretty inventive as your character scaled tablecloths, jumped between pipes got sucked into a console, becoming ships in a Frogger-meets-Galaga game within the game. If you'd invested in a Multitap you could blow the dust off it and plug it in for a genuinely fun party game.

Then the franchise dried up. *Micro Machines V4*, a true successor to *V3*, came to PlayStation 2 in 2006, though Codemasters shifted development duties to Supersonic Software who made OPS favourite *Mashed* back in 2004. The concept of tiny cars on life-sized circuits was getting old, and *Mashed* took the kiddie concept and thrust it into a more mature and gritty environment. They knew the crowd that fell in love with the concept had grown up and successfully adapted it. For now, the *Maniacs* remain trapped in digital history.

BACK ON THE COUCH

Supersonic is back making a top-down vehicular combat game called *Wrecked: Revenge Revisited*. We'll be thrashing seven shades out it when it's released later this year.

Next month



EXCLUSIVE ►

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